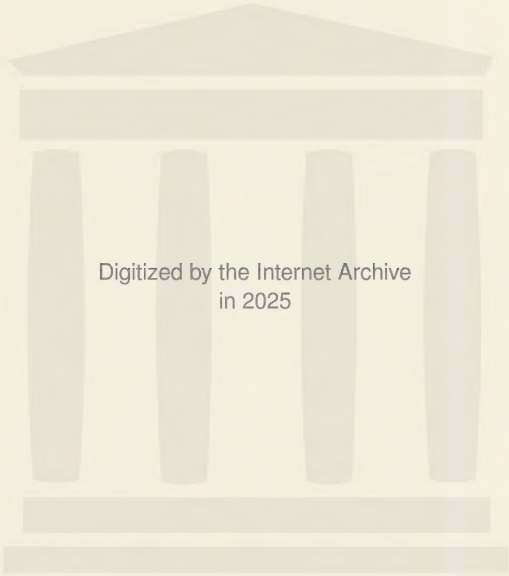
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HELLEY'S POETICAL WORKS

VOL. I

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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITIONS

AND EDITED BY

RICHARD HERNE SHEPHERD

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IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
MARGARET NICHOLSON, PUBLISHED 1810	1
Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson	7
Fragment, supposed to be an Epithalamium of Francis Ravaillac and Charlotte Corday	10
Symphony	12
Despair	13
Fragment	15
The Spectral Horseman	16
Melody to a Scene of Former Times	18
CORRESPONDENCE WITH STOCKDALE	20
THE WANDERING JEW	33
QUEEN MAB	81
NOTES TO QUEEN MAB	154
ALASTOR; OR, THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE	225
Poems	250
Stanzas.—April 1814	251
Mutability	252
A Summer-Evening Churchyard, Gloucestershire	254
To Wordsworth	255
Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte	256
Sonnet from the Italian of Dante	*ib.*
Translated from the Greek of Moschus	257
The Demon of the World. A Fragment	*ib.*

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PAGE

MONT BLANC: LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI 267

LINES TO A CRITIC 272

ROSALIND AND HELEN: A MODERN ECLOGUE . . 273

LINES WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS (Oct. 1818) 316

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY 327

SONNET. OZYMANDIAS 330

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND 331

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS 423

The Sensitive Plant 425

A Vision of the Sea 435

Ode to Heaven 441

An Exhortation 443

Ode to the West Wind 444

An Ode: Written, Oct. 1819, *before the Spaniards had recovered their Liberty* 447

The Cloud 448

To a Skylark 450

Ode to Liberty 454

Marianne's Dream 464

Arethusa 468

Love's Philosophy 471

Lines to an Indian Air 472

Song on a Faded Violet 473

Stanzas written in dejection near Naples . . . *ib.*

ADONAIS: AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS 475

LAON AND CYTHNA, OR THE REVOLUTION OF THE GOLDEN CITY 499

INTRODUCTION.

THE plan and arrangement of this new edition of Shelley's Poetical Works, in two volumes, are as follows :—

VOL. I. contains :—*Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson ;* Shelley's *Correspondence with Stockdale ; The Wandering Jew* (the only complete version); *Queen Mab*, with the Notes; *Alastor*, and other Poems; *Rosalind and Helen ; Prometheus Unbound ; Miscellaneous Poems ; Adonais ; Laon and Cythna* (as originally published, instead of the emasculated *Revolt of Islam*).

VOL. II. contains :—*The Cenci ; Julian and Maddalo* (from Shelley's manuscript); *Swellfoot the Tyrant* (from the copy in the Dyce Library at South Kensington); *The Witch of Atlas ; Epipsychidion ; Hellas ; Posthumous Poems*, published by Mrs. Shelley in 1824 and 1839; *The Masque of Anarchy* (from Shelley's manuscript); and other pieces not always brought together in other editions.

With the two exceptions indicated of poems printed from Shelley's manuscript, with important rectifications of text, all the works are printed direct from the rare original editions, of the titles of which facsimiles are given.

The poem of *Laon and Cythna*—the original version of the *Revolt of Islam*, and one of the masterpieces of

Shelley's maturer genius—is given to the world as he first wrote it. Considering that all the alterations and omissions in the later form of the work were made under outward pressure, and with warm and fervent protest from the poet himself, it is only a pious duty to his memory to substitute the perfect poem, as he wished it to stand, for the mangled and mutilated version which eventually saw the light.*

The history of the transaction is not a little curious. It is thus briefly related by one of Shelley's more recent biographers, Thomas Love Peacock, the accomplished author of *Nightmare Abbey*:—

"In the summer of 1817 Shelley wrote the *Revolt of Islam*, chiefly on a seat on a high prominence in Bisham Wood,† where he passed whole mornings with a blank book and a pencil. This work, when completed, was printed under the title of *Laon and Cythna*. In this poem he had carried the expression of his opinions, moral, political, and theological, beyond the bounds of discretion The terror which, in those days of persecution of the press, the perusal of the book inspired in Mr. Ollier, the publisher, induced him to solicit the alteration of many passages which he had marked.

* Mr. Rossetti, in his edition of Shelley, makes a kind of "hash" of the two books, adopting arbitrarily the earlier or later reading, as it happens to recommend itself to his individual taste. Mr. Buxton Forman has substantially adopted our own plan. All other editions, including those of Mrs. Shelley, reproduce the emasculated text of the *Revolt of Islam*, without any attempt at restitution of the original readings—a course preferable, perhaps, to the *via media* of Mr. Rossetti.

† Near Marlow.

Shelley was for some time inflexible; but Mr. Ollier's refusal to publish the poem as it was, backed by the advice of all his friends, induced him to submit to the required changes. Many leaves were cancelled, and it was finally published as the *Revolt of Islam*. Of *Laon and Cythna* only three copies had gone forth. One of these had found its way to the *Quarterly Review*, and the opportunity was readily seized of pouring out on it one of the most malignant effusions of the *odium theologicum* that ever appeared even in those days, and in that periodical." *

In that invaluable repository of out-of-the-way information, *Notes and Queries*, there appeared in 1862 † an interesting paper on "*Laon and Cythna* and the *Revolt of Islam*," by another poet-critic, well versed in Shelleyan matters, the late Mr. Denis Florence MacCarthy. From this paper we extract the following remarks :—

"If Mr. Peacock is correct in stating that *only three copies* of *Laon and Cythna* had gone forth, the fate of these three is easily accounted for. 'One,' as Mr. Peacock says, and as is evident both from the heading and the notes of the article referred to, 'found its way to the *Quarterly Review*.' Another was certainly sent to Godwin, as we have a letter of Shelley's, dated December 11th, 1817 (three weeks before the poem came

* *Fraser's Magazine*, January 1860, p. 100. It seems a pity that Peacock's three papers on Shelley have not been reprinted in a permanent book form.

† April 12, 1862 (3rd S. i. 283–5).

poems, I have carefully noted all the passages. In an inquiry of this kind they are all presentable, even, perhaps, the tremendous termination of stanza xxxix., canto 6, in *Laon and Cythna.*

"I may, however, say that, exclusive of the title-page and preface, but fifty-five lines of the original poem have been altered, necessitating, however, the cancelling of the leaves containing the following pages :—41, 42, 43, 44, 57, 58, 89, 90, 115, 116, 139, 140, 143, 144, 147, 148, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 199, 200, 201, 202, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 234, 235, 236, 245, 246, 249, 250, 255, 256, 263, 264, 265, 266. To these are to be added the title-page, pp. xxi, xxii. of the Preface, and the false title containing the quotation from Pindar,* which follows the address 'To Mary ——' in the *Revolt of Islam*, but which is not given in *Laon and Cythna.* Making altogether fifty-two pages (or rather twenty-six leaves) in which the one poem differs from the other."

In the present reprint the original text of *Laon and Cythna* is reproduced verbatim (with the exception that the errata noted on the fly-leaf are, of course, silently corrected). The alterations made in the later version, as afterwards published under the title of the *Revolt of Islam*, are given in foot-note form, as variorum readings.

* Ὅσαις δὲ βροτὸν ἔθνος ἀγλαίαις ἁπτόμεσθα
Περαίνει πρὸς ἔσχατον
Πλόον. ναυσὶ δ' οὔτε πεζὸς ἰὼν ἂν εὕροις
Ἐς ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυματὰν ὁδόν.
Πινδ. Πυθ. x.

Before quitting the subject of *Laon and Cythna*, we must say a word or two in reference to the attack on it in the *Quarterly Review*,* alluded to by Peacock. This is one of the most ferocious, unfeeling, and brutal onslaughts that a small critic ever was allowed to make on a great poet

A copy of the work in its original form had been sent out to the great review before the wary publisher had seen any cause for suppressing it; and on the publication of the modified *Revolt of Islam*, the reviewer did not fail to make capital out of the accident.

"*Laon and Cythna*," he says, "is the same poem with the *Revolt of Islam*—under the first name it exhibited some features which made 'the experiment on the temper of the public mind,' as the author calls it, somewhat too bold and hazardous. This knight-errant in the cause of 'a liberal and comprehensive morality' had already sustained some 'perilous handling' in his encounters with Prejudice and Error, and acquired in consequence of it a small portion of *the better part of valour*. Accordingly *Laon and Cythna* withdrew from circulation; and happy had it been for Mr. Shelley if he had been contented with his failure, and closed his experiments. But with minds of a certain class, notoriety, infamy, anything is better than obscurity. Baffled in a thousand attempts after fame, they will still make one more at whatever risk, and they end commonly like an awkward chemist who perseveres in tampering with his ingredients, till, in an unlucky moment, they take fire, and he is blown up by the explosion.

* No. 42 (April 1819), pp. 460–474.

"*Laon and Cythna* has accordingly reappeared with a new name, and a few slight alterations. If we could trace in these any signs of an altered spirit, we should have hailed with the sincerest pleasure the return of one whom Nature intended for better things, to the ranks of virtue and religion. But Mr. Shelley is no penitent; he has reproduced the same poison, a little, and but a little, more cautiously disguised, and as it is thus intended only to do the more mischief at less personal risk to the author, our duty requires us to use his own evidence against himself, to interpret him where he is obscure now, by himself where he was plain before, and to exhibit the 'fearful consequences' to which he would bring us, as he drew them in the boldness of his first conception.

"Before, however, we do this, we will discharge our duty to Mr. Shelley as poetical critics—in a case like the present, indeed, where the freight is so pernicious, it is but a secondary duty to consider the 'build' of the vessel which bears it; but it is a duty too peculiarly our own to be wholly neglected. Though we should be sorry to see the *Revolt of Islam* in our readers' hands, we are bound to say that it is not without beautiful passages, that the language is in general free from errors of taste, and the versification smooth and harmonious.

"The poem could never, we are persuaded, become popular. Its merits and its faults equally conspire against it; it has not much ribaldry or voluptuousness for prurient imaginations, and no personal scandal for the malicious; and even those on whom it might be expected to act most dangerously by its semblance of enthusiasm, will have stout hearts to proceed beyond the first canto. As

a whole, it is insupportably dull, and laboriously obscure; its absurdities are not of the kind which provoke laughter; the story is almost wholly devoid of interest, and very meagre; nor can we admire Mr. Shelley's mode of making up for this defect—as he has but one incident where he should have ten, he tells that one so intricately, that it takes the time of ten to comprehend it."

We pass on to the great tragedy of *The Cenci*. This is reproduced from the Italian Edition, printed under Shelley's own eyes, but into which some errors had slipped that the later (London) edition of 1821 has enabled us silently to correct.

The Cenci (which has been considered worthy of the greatest Elizabethan masters) was intended by Shelley for dramatic representation, and he was in hopes of inducing the famous Miss O'Neil to undertake the part of the heroine. The revolting nature of the plot, however, precluded its acceptance.

"Shelley only once," says Mr. Peacock, "descended into the arena of reality, and that was in the tragedy of *The Cenci*.* This is unquestionably a work of great dramatic power, but it is as unquestionably not a work for the modern English stage. It would have been a great work in the days of Massinger. He sent it to me to introduce it to Covent Garden Theatre. I did so; but the result was as I expected. It could not be received; though great admiration was expressed of the author's powers, and great hopes of his success with a less repulsive subject."

Swellfoot the Tyrant is reproduced from a copy of the

* *Fraser's Magazine*, ubi suprà.

POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS OF MARGARET NICHOLSON.

THE following extraordinary productions were written by Shelley at the age of eighteen during his brief University career at Oxford. The proofs were submitted before publication to his friend and fellow-collegian, Jefferson Hogg, who suggested the whimsical title under which they afterwards appeared, and made sundry alterations with the view of giving to the various pieces an air of burlesque, which Shelley had not originally intended. When the proofs were returned to the bookseller, under whose auspices they were printed, he was so pleased with the humour of the thing, that he offered to publish the little pamphlet at his own risk. It came out as a thin quarto, and appears to have had a considerable sale among the Oxonians. Mr. Hogg states that he used to meet gownsmen in High Street reading the little volume as they walked with a grave and sage delight. "It was indeed a kind of fashion to be seen reading it in public, as a mark of a nice discernment, of a delicate and fastidious taste in poetry, and the very criterion of a choice spirit. Nobody suspected, or could suspect, who was the author; the thing passed off as the genuine production of the would-be regicide."

Here, in this boyish work we already find Shelley aspiring to further "the dearest interest of universal happiness." Here also, in spite of Hogg's buffoonish interpolations, we find some passages of rare poetic beauty, giving no uncertain promise of great things to come.

POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS

OF

MARGARET NICHOLSON;

BEING POEMS FOUND AMONGST THE PAPERS OF THAT NOTED FEMALE WHO ATTEMPTED THE LIFE OF THE KING IN 1786.

EDITED BY

JOHN FITSVICTOR.

OXFORD:
PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. MUNDAY.

1810

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE energy and native genius of these fragments must be the only apology which the Editor can make for thus intruding them on the public notice. The *first* I found with no title, and have left it so. It is intimately connected with the dearest interests of universal happiness; and much as we may deplore the fatal and enthusiastic tendency which the ideas of this poor female had acquired, we cannot fail to pay the tribute of unequivocal regret to the departed memory of genius, which, had it been rightly organized, would have made that intellect, which has since become the victim of frenzy and despair, a most brilliant ornament to society.

In case the sale of these fragments evinces that the public have any curiosity to be presented with a more copious collection of my unfortunate aunt's poems, I have other papers in my possession, which shall, in that case, be subjected to their notice. It may be supposed they require much arrangement; but I send the following to the press in the same state in which they came into my possession.

J. F.

POSTHUMOUS FRAGMENTS OF MARGARET NICHOLSON.

AMBITION, power, and avarice, now have hurl'd
Death, fate, and ruin, on a bleeding world.
See on yon heath what countless victims lie,
Hark ! what loud shrieks ascend thro' yonder sky ;
Tell then the cause, 'tis sure the avenger's rage
Has swept these myriads from life's crowded stage :
Hark to that groan, an anguish'd hero dies,
He shudders in death's latest agonies ;
Yet does a fleeting hectic flush his cheek,
Yet does his parting breath essay to speak—

" Oh God ! my wife, my children—Monarch, thou
" For whose support this fainting frame lies low ;
" For whose support in distant lands I bleed,
" Let his friends' welfare be the warrior's meed.
" He hears me not—ah ! no—kings cannot hear,
" For passion's voice has dull'd their listless ear.
" To thee, then, mighty God, I lift my moan,
" Thou wilt not scorn a supplant's anguish'd groan
" Oh ! now I die—but still is death's fierce pain—
" God hears my prayer—we meet, we meet again."
He spake, reclined him on death's bloody bed,
And with a parting groan his spirit fled.

Oppressors of mankind, to *you* we owe
The hateful streams from whence these miseries flow ;

For you how many a mother weeps her son,
Snatch'd from life's course ere half his race was run!
For you how many a widow drops a tear,
In silent anguish, on her husband's bier!

"Is it then Thine, Almighty Power," she cries,
"Whence tears of endless sorrow dim these eyes?
"Is this the system which Thy powerful sway,
"Which else in shapeless chaos sleeping lay,
"Form'd and approved?—it cannot be—but oh!
"Forgive me, Heaven, my brain is warp'd by woe."

'Tis not—He never bade the war-note swell,
He never triumph'd in the work of hell—
Monarchs of earth! thine is the baleful deed,
Thine are the crimes for which thy subjects bleed.
Ah! when will come the sacred fated time,
When man unsullied by his leaders' crime,
Despising wealth, ambition, pomp, and pride,
Will stretch him fearless by his foemen's side?
Ah! when will come the time, when o'er the plain
No more shall death and desolation reign?
When will the sun smile on the bloodless field,
And the stern warrior's arm the sickle wield?
Not whilst some king, in cold ambition's dreams,
Plans for the field of death his plodding schemes;
Not whilst for private pique the public fall,
And one frail mortal's mandate governs all.
Swell'd with command and mad with dizzying sway,
Who sees unmoved his myriads fade away,
Careless who lives or dies, so that he gains
Some trivial point for which he took the pains.
What then are kings?—I see the trembling crowd,
I hear their fulsome clamours echo'd loud;
Their stern oppressor pleased appears awhile,
But April's sunshine is a Monarch's smile—
Kings are but dust—the last eventful day

Will level all and make them lose their sway ;
Will dash the sceptre from the Monarch's hand,
And from the warrior's grasp wrest the ensanguined brand.

Oh ! Peace, soft Peace, art thou for ever gone,
Is thy fair form indeed for ever flown ?
And love and concord hast thou swept away,
As if incongruous with thy parted sway ?
Alas ! I fear thou hast, for none appear.
Now o'er the palsied earth stalks giant Fear,
With War, and Woe, and Terror, in his train :
Listening he pauses on the embattled plain,
Then speeding swiftly o'er the ensanguined heath,
Has left the frightful work to hell and death.
See ! gory Ruin yokes his blood-stain'd car,
He scents the battle's carnage from afar ;
Hell and destruction mark his mad career,
He tracts the rapid step of hurrying Fear ;
Whilst ruin'd towns and smoking cities tell
That thy work, Monarch, is the work of hell.
It is thy work ! I hear a voice repeat,
Shakes the broad basis of thy blood-stain'd seat ;
And at the orphan's sigh, the widow's moan,
Totters the fabric of thy guilt-stain'd throne—
" It is thy work, O Monarch," now the sound
Fainter and fainter yet is borne around :
Yet to enthusiast ears the murmurs tell
That Heaven, indignant at the work of hell,
Will soon the cause, the hated cause, remove
Which tears from earth peace, innocence, and love.

FRAGMENT.

SUPPOSED TO BE AN EPITHALAMIUM OF FRANCIS RAVAILLAC AND CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

IS midnight now—athwart the murky air
Dank lurid meteors shoot a livid gleam,
From the dark storm-clouds flashes a fearful glare,
It shews the bending oak, the roaring stream.
I ponder'd on the woes of lost mankind,
I ponder'd on the ceaseless rage of Kings,
My rapt soul dwelt upon the ties that bind
The mazy volume of commingling things,
When fell and wild misrule to man stern sorrow brings.

I heard a yell—it was not the knell,
When the blasts on the wild lake sleep,
That floats on the pause of the summer gale's swell,
O'er the breast of the waveless deep.
I thought it had been death's accents cold
That bade me recline on the shore ;
I laid mine hot head on the surge-beaten mould,
And thought to breathe no more.

But a heavenly sleep
That did suddenly steep
In balm my bosom's pain,
Pervaded my soul,
And free from control,
Did mine intellect range again.

Methought enthroned upon a silvery cloud,
Which floated 'mid a strange and brilliant light,—
My form upborne by viewless ether rode,
And spurn'd the lessening realms of earthly night.
What heavenly notes burst on my ravish'd ears,
What beauteous spirits met my dazzled eye !
Hark ! louder swells the music of the spheres,

More clear the forms of speechless bliss float by,
And heavenly gestures suit ethereal melody.

But fairer than the spirits of the air,
More graceful than the Sylph of symmetry,
Than the enthusiast's fancied love more fair,
Were the bright forms that swept the azure sky.
Enthroned in roseate light, a heavenly band
Strew'd flowers of bliss that never fade away ;
They welcome virtue to its native land,
And songs of triumph greet the joyous day
When endless bliss the woes of fleeting life repay.

Congenial minds will seek their kindred soul,
E'en though the tide of time has roll'd between ;
They mock weak matter's impotent control,
And seek of endless life the eternal scene.
At death's vain summons *this* will never die,
In Nature's chaos *this* will not decay—
These are the bands which closely, warmly tie
Thy soul, O Charlotte, 'yond this chain of clay,
To him who thine must be till time shall fade away.

Yes, Francis ! thine was the dear knife that tore
A tyrant's heart-strings from his guilty breast,
Thine was the daring at a tyrant's gore
To smile in triumph, to contemn the rest ;
And thine, loved glory of thy sex ! to tear
From its base shrine a despot's haughty soul,
To laugh at sorrow in secure despair,
To mock, with smiles, life's lingering control,
And triumph 'mid the griefs that round thy fate did roll.

Yes ! the fierce spirits of the avenging deep,
With endless tortures goad their guilty shades.
I see the lank and ghastly spectres sweep
Along the burning length of yon arcades :

And I see Satan stalk athwart the plain ;
He hastes along the burning soil of hell.
" Welcome, thou despots, to my dark domain ;
With maddening joy mine anguish'd senses swell
To welcome to their home the friends I love so well."

Hark to those notes, how sweet, how thrilling sweet,
They echo to the sound of angels' feet.

Oh haste to the bower where roses are spread,
For there is prepared thy nuptial bed.
Oh haste—hark ! hark ! they're gone.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

Stay, ye days of contentment and joy,
Whilst love every care is erasing,
Stay, ye pleasures that never can cloy,
And ye spirits that can never cease pleasing.

And if any soft passion be near,
Which mortals, frail mortals, can know,
Let love shed on the bosom a tear,
And dissolve the chill ice-drop of woe.

SYMPHONY.

FRANCIS.

" SOFT, my dearest angel, stay,
" Oh ! you suck my soul away ;
" Suck on, suck on, I glow, I glow !
" Tides of maddening passion roll,
" And streams of rapture drown my soul.
" Now give me one more billing kiss,
" Let your lips now repeat the bliss,
" Endless kisses steal my breath,
" No life can equal such a death."

CHARLOTTE.

"Oh! yes, I will kiss thine eyes so fair,
"And I will clasp thy form;
"Serene is the breath of the balmy air,
"But I think, love, thou feelest me warm.
"And I will recline on thy marble neck
"Till I mingle into thee.
"And I will kiss the rose on thy cheek,
"And thou shalt give kisses to me.
"For here is no morn to flout our delight,
"Oh! dost thou not joy at this?
"And here we may lie an endless night,
"A long, long night of bliss."

Spirits, when raptures move,
Say what it is to love,
When passion's tear stands on the cheek,
When bursts the unconscious sigh;
And the tremulous lips dare not speak
What is told by the soul-felt eye.
But what is sweeter to revenge's ear
Than the fell tyrant's last expiring yell?
Yes! than love's sweetest blisses 'tis more dear
To drink the floatings of a despot's knell.
I wake—'tis done—'tis o'er.

DESPAIR.

AND canst thou mock mine agony, thus calm
In cloudless radiance, Queen of silver night?
Can you, ye flowerets, spread your perfumed balm
'Mid pearly gems of dew that shine so bright?

And you, wild winds, thus can you sleep so still
  Whilst throbs the tempest of my breast so high?
Can the fierce night-fiends rest on yonder hill,
  And, in the eternal mansions of the sky,
Can the directors of the storm in powerless silence lie?

Hark! I hear music on the zephyr's wing,
  Louder it floats along the unruffled sky;
Some fairy sure has touch'd the viewless string—
  Now faint in distant air the murmurs die,
Awhile it stills the tide of agony.
  Now—now it loftier swells—again stern woe
Arises with the awakening melody.
  Again fierce torments, such as demons know,
In bitterer, feller tide, on this torn bosom flow.

Arise, ye sightless spirits of the storm,
  Ye unseen minstrels of the aërial song,
Pour the fierce tide around this lonely form,
  And roll the tempest's wildest swell along.
Dart the red lightning, wing the forked flash,
  Pour from thy cloud-form'd hills the thunder's roar;
Arouse the whirlwind—and let ocean dash
  In fiercest tumult on the rocking shore,
Destroy this life or let earth's fabric be no more.

Yes! every tie that links me here is dead;
  Mysterious fate, thy mandate I obey,
Since hope, and peace, and joy, for aye are fled,
  I come, terrific power, I come away.
Then o'er this ruin'd soul let spirits of hell,
  In triumph, laughing wildly, mock its pain;
And though with direst pangs mine heart-strings swell,
  I'll echo back their deadly yells again,
Cursing the power that ne'er made aught in vain.

FRAGMENT.

ES ! all is past—swift time has fled away,
Yet its swell pauses on my sickening mind ;
How long will horror nerve this frame of clay ?
I'm dead, and lingers yet my soul behind.
Oh ! powerful fate, revoke thy deadly spell,
And yet that may not ever, ever be,
Heaven will not smile upon the work of hell ;
Ah ! no, for heaven cannot smile on me ;
Fate, envious fate, has seal'd my wayward destiny.

I sought the cold brink of the midnight surge,
I sigh'd beneath its wave to hide my woes,
The rising tempest sung a funeral dirge,
And on the blast a frightful yell arose.
Wild flew the meteors o'er the madden'd main,
Wilder did grief athwart my bosom glare ;
Still'd was the unearthly howling, and a strain
Swell'd 'mid the tumult of the battling air,
'Twas like a spirit's song, but yet more soft and fair.

I met a maniac, like he was to me,
I said—"Poor victim, wherefore dost thou roam ?
"And canst thou not contend with agony,
"That thus at midnight thou dost quit thine home ?"
"Ah there she sleeps : cold is her bloodless form,
"And I will go to slumber in her grave ;
"And then our ghosts, whilst raves the madden'd storm,
"Will sweep at midnight o'er the wilder'd wave ;
"Wilt thou our lowly beds with tears of pity lave ?"

"Ah ! no, I cannot shed the pitying tear,
"This breast is cold, this heart can feel no more ;
"But I can rest me on thy chilling bier,
"Can shriek in horror to the tempest's roar."

THE SPECTRAL HORSEMAN.

WHAT was the shriek that struck fancy's ear,
As it sate on the ruins of time that is past?
Hark! it floats on the fitful blast of the wind,
And breathes to the pale moon a funeral sigh.
It is the Benshie's moan* on the storm,
Or a shivering fiend that, thirsting for sin,
Seeks murder and guilt when virtue sleeps,
Wing'd with the power of some ruthless king,
And sweeps o'er the breast of the prostrate plain.
It was not a fiend from the regions of hell
That pour'd its low moan on the stillness of night;
It was not a ghost of the guilty dead,
Nor a yelling vampire reeking with gore;
But aye at the close of seven years' end,
That voice is mix'd with the swell of the storm.
And aye at the close of seven years' end,
A shapeless shadow that sleeps on the hill
Awakens and floats on the mist of the heath.
It is not the shade of a murder'd man,
Who has rush'd uncall'd to the throne of his God,
And howls in the pause of the eddying storm.
This voice is low, cold, hollow, and chill,
'Tis not heard by the ear, but is felt in the soul.
'Tis more frightful far than the death-demon's scream,
Or the laughter of fiends when they howl o'er the corpse
Of a man who has sold his soul to hell.
It tells the approach of a mystic form,
A white courser bears the shadowy sprite;
More thin they are than the mists of the mountain,

* Mr. Rossetti suggests that both sense and metre require the insertion of the word *not* in this line, of which he believes the true reading to be

"It is not the Benshie's moan on the storm."—ED.

When the clear moonlight sleeps on the waveless lake.
More pale *his* cheek than the snows of Nithona,
When winter rides on the northern blast,
And howls in the midst of the leafless wood.
Yet when the fierce swell of the tempest is raving,
And the whirlwinds howl in the caves of Inisfallen,
Still secure mid the wildest war of the sky,
The phantom courser scours the waste,
And his rider howls in the thunder's roar.
O'er him the fierce bolts of avenging heaven
Pause, as in fear, to strike his head.
The meteors of midnight recoil from his figure,
Yet the wilder'd peasant that oft passes by,
With wonder beholds the blue flash thro' his form :
And his voice, though faint as the sighs of the dead,
The startled passenger shudders to hear,
More distinct than the thunder's wildest roar.
Then does the dragon, who, chain'd in the caverns
To eternity, curses the champion of Erin,
Moan and yell loud at the lone hour of midnight,
And twine his vast wreathes round the forms of the demons ;
Then in agony roll his death-swimming eyeballs,
Though wilder'd by death, yet never to die !
Then he shakes from his skeleton folds the nightmares,
Who, shrieking in agony, seek the couch
Of some fever'd wretch who courts sleep in vain ;
Then the tombless ghosts of the guilty dead
In horror pause on the fitful gale.
They float on the swell of the eddying tempest,
And scared seek the caves of gigantic * *
Where their thin forms pour unearthly sounds
On the blast that sweeps the breast of the lake,
And mingles its swell with the moonlight air.

MELODY TO A SCENE OF FORMER TIMES.

ART thou, indeed, for ever gone,
For ever, ever lost to me?
Must this poor bosom beat alone,
Or beat at all, if not for thee?
Ah! why was love to mortals given,
To lift them to the height of heaven,
Or dash them to the depths of hell?
Yet I do not reproach thee, dear!
Ah! no, the agonies that swell
This panting breast, this frenzied brain,
Might wake my ———'s slumbering tear.
Oh! heaven is witness I did love,
And heaven does know I love thee still,
Does know the fruitless, sickening thrill,
When reason's judgment vainly strove
To blot thee from my memory;
But which might never, never be.
Oh! I appeal to that blest day
When passion's wildest ecstasy
Was coldness to the joys I knew,
When every sorrow sunk away.
Oh! I had never lived before,
But now those blisses are no more.
And now I cease to live again,
I do not blame thee, love; ah no!
The breast that feels this anguish'd woe
Throbs for thy happiness alone.
Two years of speechless bliss are gone,
I thank thee, dearest, for the dream.
'Tis night—what faint and distant scream
Comes on the wild and fitful blast?
It moans for pleasures that are past,
It moans for days that are gone by.
Oh! lagging hours, how slow you fly!

I see a dark and lengthen'd vale,
The black view closes with the tomb ;
But darker is the lowering gloom
That shades the intervening dale.
In vision'd slumber for awhile
I seem again to share thy smile,
I seem to hang upon thy tone.
Again you say, "confide in me,
"For I am thine, and thine alone,
"And thine must ever, ever be."
But oh ! awakening still anew,
Athwart my enanguish'd senses flew
A fiercer, deadlier agony !

CORRESPONDENCE WITH STOCKDALE.

(1810.)

ORIGINAL POETRY BY VICTOR AND CAZIRE.

[Stockdale, the publisher of Shelley's romance of *St. Irvyne*, inserted in the earlier numbers of his weekly *Budget* the following account of his connexion with the poet. It will be found interesting and important both as containing a number of inedited letters of Shelley, throwing considerable light on his university career, and also as giving a description of a volume of poems partly written by Shelley, and published by Stockdale, which has been hitherto sought for in vain.]

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

THE unfortunate subject of these very slight recollections introduced himself to me early in the autumn of 1810. He was extremely young; I should think that he did not look more than eighteen. With anxiety in his countenance, he requested me to extricate him from a pecuniary difficulty, in which he was involved with a printer, whose name I cannot call to mind, but who resided at Horsham, near to which Timothy Shelley, Esq., M.P., afterwards I believe made a baronet, the father of our poet, had a seat called Field Place. I am not quite certain how the difference between the poet and the printer was arranged; but, after I had looked over the account, I know that it was paid: though, whether I assisted in the payment by money or acceptance, I cannot remember. Be that as it may, on the 17th

September, 1810, I received fourteen hundred and eighty copies of a thin royal 8vo. volume, in sheets, and not gathered. It was entitled "Original Poetry, by Alonzo and Cazire,"* or two names, something like them. The author told me that the poems were the joint production of himself and a friend, whose name was forgotten by me as soon as I heard it. I advertised the work, which was to be retailed at 3s. 6d., in nearly all the London papers of the day, seventeen in number; but I was told that, though paid for, it did not appear in the *Times*. In many papers, however, I saw it. I am only particular on this point, because few, if any, were sold in consequence, as I intimated was not unlikely to be the case; though, even from these boyish trifles, assisted by my personal intercourse with the author, I at once formed the opinion that he was not an every day character.

In the various wrecks, to which my property has been subjected, I have recovered none of Mr. Shelley's letters, previous to September, 1810; though I attach little interest to them, beyond their having emanated from such a pen.

"FIELD PLACE, *September 6th*, 1810.

"SIR.—I have to return you my thankful acknowledgment for the receipt of the books, which arrived as soon as I had any reason to expect. The superfluity shall be balanced as soon as I pay for some books which I shall trouble you to bind for me.

"I enclose you the title-page of the Poems, which, as you see, you have mistaken on account of the illegibility

* In *The Morning Post* of September 19th, 1810, is the following advertisement :—

"*This day is Published, in royal 8vo., price 4s. in boards,*

ORIGINAL POETRY,

BY VICTOR AND CAZIRE,

Sold by Stockdale, Junior, No. 41, Pall Mall."

of my handwriting. I have had the last proof impression from my printer this morning, and I suppose the execution of the work will not be long delayed. As soon as it possibly can, it shall reach you, and believe me, sir, grateful for the interest you take in it.

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient humble servant,

"PERCY B. SHELLEY."

Some short time after the announcement of his poems, I happened to be perusing them with more attention than I had, till then, had leisure to bestow upon them, when I recognised in the collection one which I knew to have been written by Mr. M. G. Lewis, the author of "The Monk," and I fully anticipated the probable vexation of the juvenile-maiden-author, when I communicated my discovery to Mr. P. B. Shelley.

With all the ardour incidental to his character, which embraced youthful honour in all its brilliancy, he expressed the warmest resentment at the imposition practised upon him by his coadjutor, and entreated me to destroy all the copies, of which I may say that, through the author and me, about one hundred, in the whole, have been put into circulation. Notwithstanding their comparative demerits, this information may give them value in the eyes of their possessors, and must have the charm of novelty, perhaps, to all my readers.

THE WANDERING JEW.

IN due course I received the following epistle, including one, which is subjoined, from Messrs. Ballantyne and Co. The letters, I should premise, are transcribed literally, in every particular.

"FIELD PLACE, *September 28th*, 1810.

"SIR.—I sent, before I had the pleasure of knowing

you, the MSS. of a poem to Messrs. Ballantyne and Co., Edinburgh ; they have declined publishing it, with the enclosed letter. I now offer it to you, and depend upon your honour as a gentleman for a fair price for the copyright. It will be sent to you from Edinburgh. The subject is, 'The Wandering Jew.' As to its containing atheistical principles, I assure you I was wholly unaware of the fact hinted at. Your good sense will point out to you the impossibility of inculcating pernicious doctrines in a poem which, as you will see, is so totally abstract from any circumstances which occur under the possible view of mankind.

"I am, sir,
"Your obliged and humble servant,
"PERCY B. SHELLEY."

Mr. Stockdale, Bookseller, 41, Pall Mall, London.

[Enclosed in the above was the following letter from Messrs. Ballantyne to Shelley :—]

"EDINBURGH, *September 24th*, 1810.

"SIR,—The delay which has occurred in our reply to you respecting the poem you have obligingly offered us for publication, has arisen from our literary friends and advisers (at least such as we have confidence in) being in the country at this season, as is usual, and the time they have bestowed in its perusal.

"We are extremely sorry, at length, after the most mature deliberation, to be under the necessity of declining the honour of being the publishers of the present poem ; —not that we doubt its success, but that it is, perhaps, better suited to the character and liberal feeling of the English, than the bigoted spirit which yet pervades many cultivated minds in this country. Even Walter Scott is assailed on all hands at present, by our Scotch spiritual and evangelical magazines and instructors, for having

promulgated atheistical doctrines in the 'Lady of the Lake.'

"We beg you will have the goodness to advise us how it should be returned, and we think its being consigned to the care of some person in London would be more likely to ensure its safety than addressing it to Horsham.

"We are, sir,

"Your most obedient humble servants,

"JOHN BALLANTYNE & CO."

It should be observed that Mr. Shelley, having found from my conversation that I was not likely to publish any work against religion, disavowed that imputation on his poem, which, though long expected, did not arrive. On the 13th November, 1810, as I find by my own endorsement, I received a letter which, with his desire to have other books of a similar tendency (Godwin's Political Justice, &c.) satisfied me that he was in a situation of impending danger, from which the most friendly and cautious prudence alone could withdraw him. The letter was as follows:

"OXFORD, *Sunday, November 11th*, 1810.

"SIR,—I wish you to obtain for me a book which answers to the following description. It is an Hebrew essay, demonstrating that the Christian religion is false, and is mentioned in one of the numbers of the *Christian Observer* of last spring, by a clergyman, as an unanswerable, yet sophistical argument. If it is translated in Greek, Latin, or any of the European languages, I would thank you to send it to me.

"I am, sir, your humble servant,

"PERCY B. SHELLEY."

ST. IRVYNE.

I WAS at this time not a little confirmed in my apprehen-

sions by perusing his manuscript of *St. Irvyne, the Rosicrucian*, which I promised to revise and print for him. His ardent mind, and somewhat natural haughtiness of disposition, rendered him very impatient of control. He also knew, as his father told me, that he would inherit from his grandfather an estate of £5000 a-year, which would be wholly at his own disposal. His father did not appear to me, in the few conversations I had with him in my shop, to be particularly bright, though he did seem, as I thought, inclined to exercise the parental authority with most injudicious despotism. I was not long in discovering that he kept his son very short of money, and that he was especially desirous of wielding the power of a father, while his son was too little inclined to submit his own superior talents, natural and acquired, to the harsh orders of a mind utterly inadequate to such an office. The consequence was that a mutual disposition to irritation and obstinacy produced mutual resistance and distrust, if not dislike and alienation. These details I give wholly from memory. I must continue Mr. Shelley's letters.

"UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, *November 14th*, 1810.

"DEAR SIR,—I return you the romance by this day's coach. I am much obligated by the trouble you have taken to fit it for the press. I am myself by no means a good hand at correction, but I think I have obviated the principal objections which you allege.

"Ginotti, as you will see, did *not* die by Wolfstein's hand, but by the influence of that natural magic which, when the secret was imparted to the latter, destroyed him. Mountfort being a character of inferior import, I did not think it necessary to state the catastrophe of *him*, as at best it could be but uninteresting. Eloise and Fitzeustace are married, and happy, I suppose, and Megalena dies by the same means as Wolfstein. I do not myself see any

other explanation that is required. As to the method of publishing it, I think, as it is a thing which almost *mechanically* sells to circulating libraries, &c., I would wish it to be published on my *own* account.

"I am surprised that you have not received the 'Wandering Jew,' and in consequence write to Mr. Ballantyne to mention it; you will doubtlessly, therefore, receive it soon. —Should you still perceive in the romance any error of flagrant incoherency, &c., it must be altered, but I should conceive it will (being wholly so abrupt) not require it.

"I am,

"Your sincere humble servant,

"PERCY B. SHELLEY.

"Shall you make this in one or two volumes? Mr. Robinson, of Paternoster Row, published 'Zastrozzi.'"

"UNI. COLL., *Monday* [*19th Nov.*, 1810].

"MY DEAR SIR,—I did not think it possible that the romance would make but one small volume. It will at all events be larger than 'Zastrozzi.' What I mean as 'Rosicrucian' is, the elixir of eternal life which Ginotti had obtained. Mr. Godwin's romance of 'St. Leon' turns upon that superstition. I enveloped it in mystery for the greater excitement of interest, and, on a re-examination, you will perceive that Mountford physically did kill Ginotti, which must appear from the latter's paleness.

"Will you have the goodness to send me Mr. Godwin's 'Political Justice'?

"When do you suppose 'St. Irvyne' will be out? If you have not yet got the 'Wandering Jew' from Mr. B., I will send you a MSS. copy which I possess.

"Yours sincerely,

"P. B. SHELLEY.

Mr. Stockdale, Bookseller, 41, Pall Mall, London.

"OXFORD, *Dec. 2d*, 1810.

"DEAR SIR,—Will you, if you have got two copies of the 'Wandering Jew,' send one of them to me, as I have thought of some corrections which I wish to make? Your opinion on it will likewise much oblige me.

"When do you suppose that Southey's 'Curse of Kehama' will come out? I am curious to see it, and when *does* 'St. Irvyne' come out?

"I shall be in London the middle of this month, when I will do myself the pleasure of calling on you.

"Yours sincerely, "P. B. SHELLEY.

"Mr. Stockdale, Bookseller, 41, Pall Mall, London."

"FIELD PLACE, *Dec. 18th*, 1810.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I saw your advertisement of the Romance, and approve of it highly; it is likely to excite curiosity. I would thank you to send copies directed as follows:—

Miss Marshall, Horsham, Sussex.

T. Medwin, Esq., Horsham, Sussex.

T. J. Hogg, Esq., Rev. — Dayrell's, Lynnington Dayrell, Buckingham,

and six copies to myself. In case the 'Curse of Kehama' has yet appeared, I would thank you for that likewise. I have in preparation a novel; it is principally constructed to convey metaphysical and political opinions by way of conversation. It shall be sent to you as soon as completed, but it shall receive more correction than I trouble myself to give to wild romance and poetry.

"Mr. Munday, of Oxford,* will take some romances; I do not know whether he sends directly to you, or through the medium of some other bookseller. I will enclose the printer's account for your inspection in a future letter.

"Dear sir, "Yours sincerely,

"Mr. Stockdale. "P. B. SHELLEY."

* The publisher of *Margaret Nicholson*.

"FIELD PLACE, *23rd Dec.* 1810.

"SIR,—I take the earliest opportunity of expressing to you my best thanks for the very liberal and handsome manner in which you imparted to me the sentiments you held towards my son, and the open and friendly communication.

"I shall ever esteem it, and hold it in remembrance. I will take an opportunity of calling on you again, when the call at St. Stephen's Chapel enforces my attendance by a call of the House.

"My son begs to make his compliments to you.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your very obedient humble servant,

"Mr. Stockdale. "T. SHELLEY."

January 11*th*, 1811.

"DEAR SIR,—I would thank you to send a copy of 'St. Irvyne' to Miss Harriet Westbrook, 10, Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square. In the course of a fortnight I shall do myself the pleasure of calling on you. With respect to the printer's bill, I made him explain the distinctions of the costs, which I hope are intelligible..

"Do you find that the public are captivated by the title-page of 'St. Irvyne?'

"Your sincere

"Mr. Stockdale. "P. B. SHELLEY."

About this time not merely slight hints, but constant allusions, personally and by letters, which are mislaid, lost, or destroyed, rendered me extremely uneasy respecting Mr. Shelley's religious or indeed irreligious sentiments, towards which all his conversation, reading, and pursuits clearly tended. I felt certain that *The Wandering Jew* had disclosed such sentiments as had excited Ballantyne's alarm, which I much regretted having been expressed in a way far from discouraging to their promulgation. It

is singular that, after all, the poem of The Wandering Jew never reached my hands, nor have I either seen or heard of it, from that time.

I was more decided than ever that Shelley had some companions, who pandered to his unhappy predisposition against revealed religion. I had already given some delicate hints on that subject to his father, who was not the quickest in the world at comprehending anything less conspicuous than a pike-staff. I had told him what my own mode of action would have been towards a son so wretchedly deluded. But I could make very little way. Notwithstanding his father had expressed such delight and obligation for the interest I had given proofs of feeling for his son, when, by the appearance of St. Irvyne, he found that his son had probably incurred some expense, for which he knew that he must stand indebted to me, he told me that he was not of age, and that he, his father, would never pay a farthing of it. I repeated my expressions (and they really emanated from my heart) of the fullest assurance of his son's honour and rectitude, and my conviction that he would vegetate, rather than live, to effect the discharge of every honest claim upon him. I will now repeat that such opinion has not been shaken, although I have never received, directly nor indirectly, one farthing of my just claim, which, principal and interest together, cannot be less than £300.

Young Mr. Shelley's readiness in conceding his opinion to me, even on his most enthusiastic topics, convinced me, as I strove to explain to his father, that a sound, steady friend, who would enter into his son's feelings with correspondent warmth might (&c). I was too fatally convinced that all my efforts had been vain; and that the work of the destroyer was in active operation by the very means which I had, in such good time, suggested for, shall I not say his salvation

MR. JEFFERSON HOGG.

MR. JEFFERSON HOGG had called upon me occasionally, as Mr. Bysshe Shelley's friend, at his request; but I really did not credit that, with, as I thought, a mind so infinitely beneath that of his friend, he could be the master spirit to lead him astray; but seeing, by Mr. Hogg's address, that he was connected, in some way, with the worthy Rev. John Dayrell, of Lynnington Dayrell, not far from my wife's native place, and that Shelley was unquestionably in a most devious path, I inquired of Mrs. Stockdale's possible knowledge of him.

Mrs. Stockdale's recollection and inquiry left no doubt on my mind that if I did not rush forward, and, however rudely, pull my young candidate for the bays from the precipice, over which he was suspended by a hair, his fate must be inevitable.

Shelley had informed me, either verbally, or by letter, or, not improbably, by both, of his having completed a metaphysical essay, in support of Atheism, and which he intended to promulgate throughout the university. I represented that his expulsion would be the inevitable consequence of so flagrant an insult to such a body. He however, was unmoved, and I instantly wrote to his father explicitly enough for any other person than himself.

"OXFORD, *28th of January*, 1811.

"SIR,—On my arrival at Oxford, my friend Mr. Hogg communicated to me the letters which passed in consequence of your misrepresentations of his character, the abuse of that confidence which he invariably reposed in you. I now, sir, desire to know whether you mean the evasions in your first letter to Mr. Hogg, your insulting *attempt* at coolness in your second, as a means of escaping *safely* from the opprobrium naturally attached to so ungentlemanlike an abuse of confidence (to say nothing of

misrepresentations) as that which my father communicated to me, or as a *denial* of the fact of having acted in this unprecedented, this *scandalous* manner. If the former be your intention, I will compassionate your cowardice, and my friend, pitying your *weakness*, will take no further notice of your contemptible *attempts* at calumny. If the latter is your intention, I feel it my duty to declare, as my veracity and that of my father is thereby called in question, that I will never be satisfied, despicable as I may consider the author of that affront, until my friend has ample apology for the injury you have *attempted* to do him. I expect an immediate, and *demand* a satisfactory letter.

"Sir, I am,

"Your obedient humble servant,

"PERCY B. SHELLEY."

"Mr. J. J. Stockdale, Bookseller, 41 Pall Mall, London.

"FIELD PLACE, *30th of January*, 1811.

"SIR,—I am so surprised on the receipt of your letter of this morning, that I cannot comprehend the meaning of the language you use. I shall be in London next week, and will then call on you.

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient humble servant.

"T. SHELLEY."

"Mr. Stockdale, Bookseller, Pall Mall, London.

On Mr. Shelley's arrival in London, he called, agreeably to his promise, and I gave him such particulars as the urgency of the case required. The consequence was, as but too often happens, that all concerned became inimical to me. I had satisfied my own feelings at the expense of my purse; and how much those feelings were aggravated by the arrival of news of the catastrophe which I had too truly predicted, I shall not attempt to describe. On Mr. Bysshe Shelley's arrival in London, he, on the 11th of

April wrote me the following brief letter, for we had already met for the last time.

"15, Poland Street, Oxford Street.

"Sir. Will you have the goodness to inform me of the number of copies which you have sold of 'St. Irvyne?' Circumstances may occur which will oblige me, in case of their event, to wish for my accounts suddenly; perhaps you had better make them out.

"Sir,

"Your obedient humble servant,

"P. B. Shelley."

"Mr. Stockdale, 41 Pall Mall.

"Sir,—Your letter has at length reached me; the remoteness of my present situation must apologise for my apparent neglect. I am sorry to say, in answer to your requisition, that the state of my finances render immediate payment perfectly impossible. It is my intention, at the earliest period of my power to do so, to discharge your account. I am aware of the imprudence of publishing a book so ill-digested as 'St Irvyne;' but are there no expectations on the profits of its sale? My studies have, since my writing it, been of a more serious nature. I am at present engaged in completing a series of moral and metaphysical essays—perhaps their copyright would be accepted in lieu of part of my debt?

"Sir, I have the honour to be,

"Your very humble servant,

"Percy B. Shelley."

"Cwmelan, Rhayader, Radnorshire, *August* 1st, 1811."*

* Stockdale's Budget, December 1826 to February 1827.

THE WANDERING JEW.

[Originally printed in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, June July 1829, and afterwards in *Fraser's Magazine*, July 1831.—ED.]

THE WANDERING JEW.

CANTO I.

"Me miserable, which way shall I fly?
Infinite wrath and infinite despair—
Which way I fly is hell—myself am hell;
And in this lowest deep a lower deep,
To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

—*Paradise Lost.*

THE brilliant orb of parting day
Diffused a rich and mellow ray
Above the mountain's brow;
It tinged the hills with lustrous light,
It tinged the promontory's height
Still sparkling with the snow;
And, as aslant it threw its beam,
Tipt with gold the mountain stream
That laved the vale below.
Long hung the eye of glory there,
And linger'd as if loth to leave
A scene so lovely and so fair.
'Twere there even luxury to grieve.
So soft the clime, so balm the air,
So pure and genial were the skies,
In sooth 'twas almost Paradise,—
For ne'er did the sun's splendour close
On such a picture of repose;—

All, all was tranquil, all was still,
Save where the music of the rill,
Or a distant waterfall,
At intervals broke on the ear
Which Echo's self was pleased to hear,
And ceased her babbling call.
With every charm the landscape glow'd
Which partial Nature's hand bestow'd;
Nor could the mimic hand of art
Such beauties or such hues impart.

Light clouds in fleeting livery gay,
Hung, painted in grotesque array
Upon the western sky:
Forgetful of the approaching dawn,
The peasants danced upon the lawn,
For the vintage time was nigh:
How jocund to the tabor's sound,
O'er the smooth, trembling turf they bound,
In every measure light and free,
The very soul of harmony;
Grace in each attitude, they move,
They thrill to amorous ecstasy,
Light as the dewdrops of the morn,
That hang upon the blossom'd thorn,
Subdued by the power of resistless Love.

Ah! days of innocence, of joy,
Of rapture that knows no alloy,
Haste on,—ye roseate hours,
Free from the world's tumultuous cares,
From pale distrust, from hopes and fears,
Baneful concomitants of time,—
'Tis yours, beneath this favour'd clime,
Your pathway strewn with flowers,
Upborne on pleasure's downy wing,
To quaff a long unfading spring,

And beat with light and careless step the ground ;
The fairest flowers too soon grow sere,
Too soon shall tempests blast the year,
And sin's eternal winter reign around.

But see, what forms are those,
Scarce seen by glimpse of dim twilight,
Wandering o'er the mountain's height?
They swiftly haste to the vale below:
One wraps his mantle around his brow,
As if to hide his woes ;
And as his steed impetuous flies,
What strange fire flashes from his eyes!
The far off city's murmuring sound
Was borne on the breeze which floated around ;
Noble Padua's lofty spire
Scarce glow'd with the sunbeam's latest fire,
Yet dashed the travellers on—
Ere night o'er the earth was spread,
Full many a mile they must have sped,
Ere their destined course was run.
Welcome was the moonbeam's ray,
Which slept upon the towers so grey.
But, hark! a convent's vesper bell—
It seemed to be a very spell—
The stranger checked his courser's rein,
And listened to the mournful sound :
Listened—and paused—and paused again :
A thrill of pity and of pain
Through his inmost soul had past,
While gushed the tear-drops silently and fast.

A crowd was at the convent gate,
The gate was opened wide ;
No longer on his steed he sate,
But mingled with the tide.

He felt a solemn awe and dread,
As he the chapel entered ;
Dim was the light from the pale moon beaming,
As it fell on the saint-cyphered panes ;
Or from the western window streaming,
Tinged the pillars with varied stains.
To the eye of enthusiasm strange forms were gliding
In each dusky recess of the aisle ;
And indefined shades in succession were striding
O'er the coignes of the pillar'd pile.
The pillars to the vaulted roof
In airy lightness rose ;
Now they mount to the rich Gothic ceiling aloof,
And exquisite tracery disclose.

The altar illumined now darts its bright rays,
The train past in brilliant array ;
On the shrine San Pietro's rich ornaments blaze,
And rival the brilliance of day.
Hark !—now the loud organ swells full on the ear—
So sweetly mellow, chaste, and clear ;
Melting, kindling, raising, firing,
Delighting now, and now inspiring,
Peal upon peal the music floats—
Now they list still as death to the dying notes ;
Whilst the soft voices of the choir,
Exalt the soul from base desire ;
Till it mounts on unearthly pinions free,
Dissolved in heavenly ecstasy.

Now a dead stillness reigned around,
Uninterrupted by a sound ;
Save when in deadened response ran,
The last faint echoes down the aisle,
Reverberated through the pile,
As within the pale the holy man,

With voice devout and saintly look,
Slow chaunted from the sacred book,
Or pious prayers were duly said,
For spirits of departed dead.
With beads and crucifix and hood,
Close by his side the abbess stood;
Now her dark penetrating eyes
Were raised in suppliance to heaven,
And now her bosom heaved with sighs,
As if to human weakness given.
Her stern, severe, yet beauteous brow
Frowned on all who stood below;
And the fire which flashed from her steady gaze,
As it turned on the listening crowd its rays,
Superior virtue told,—
Virtue as pure as heaven's own dew,
But which, untainted, never knew,
To pardon weaker mould.
The heart though chaste and cold as snow—
'Twere faulty to be virtuous so.

Not a whisper now breathed in the pillared aisle—
The stranger advanced to the altar high—
Convulsive was heard a smothered sigh!
Lo! four fair nuns to the altar draw near,
With solemn footstep, as the while
A fainting novice they bear—
The roses from her cheek are fled
But there the lily reigns instead;
Light as a sylph's, her form confest,
Beneath the drapery of her vest,
A perfect grace and symmetry;
Her eyes, with rapture form'd to move,
To melt with tenderness and love,
Or beam with sensibility,
To Heaven were raised in pious prayer,

A silent eloquence of woe ;
Now hung the pearly tear-drop there,
Sate on her cheek a fix'd despair ;
And now she beat her bosom bare,
As pure as driven snow.
Nine graceful novices around
Fresh roses strew upon the ground :
In purest white array'd,
Nine spotless vestal virgins shed
Sabæan incense o'er the head
Of the devoted maid.

They dragg'd her to the altar's pale,
The traveller leant against the rail,
And gazed with eager eye,—
His cheek was flush'd with sudden glow,
On his brow sate a darker shade of woe,
As a transient expression fled by.

The sympathetic feeling flew
Thro' every breast from man to man,
Confused and open clamors ran,
Louder and louder still they grew ;
When the abbess waved her hand,
A stern resolve was in her eye,
And every wild tumultuous cry
Was still'd at her command.

The abbess made the well-known sign—
The novice reach'd the fatal shrine,
And mercy implored from the power divine ;
At length she shriek'd aloud,
She dash'd from the supporting nun,
Ere the fatal rite was done,
And plunged amid the crowd.
Confusion reign'd throughout the throng,
Still the novice fled along.

Impell'd by frantic fear:
When the madden'd traveller's eager grasp
In firmest yet in wildest clasp
Arrested her career.
As fainting from terror she sank on the ground,
Her loosen'd locks floated her fine form around,
The zone which confined her shadowy vest
No longer her throbbing bosom prest,
Its animation dead;
No more her feverish pulse beat high,
Expression dwelt not in her eye,
Her wilder'd senses fled.

* * * * * *

Hark! hark! the demon of the storm!
I see his vast expanding form
Blend with the strange and sulphurous glare
Of comets through the turbid air.
Yes, 'twas his voice, I heard its roar,
The wild waves lash'd the cavern'd shore
In angry murmurs hoarse and loud,
Higher and higher still they rise;
Red lightnings gleam from every cloud
And paint wild shapes upon the skies;
The echoing thunder rolls around,
Convulsed with earthquake rocks the ground.

The traveller yet undaunted stood,
He heeded not the roaring flood;
Yet Rosa slept, her bosom bare,
Her cheek was deadly pale,
The ringlets of her auburn hair
Stream'd in a lengthen'd trail,
And motionless her seraph form;
Unheard, unheeded raved the storm.
Whilst, borne on the wing of the gale,
The harrowing shriek of the white sea-mew
As o'er the midnight surge she flew;

The howlings of the squally blast
As o'er the beetling cliffs it past;
Mingled with the peals on high,
That, swelling louder, echo'd by,
Assailed the traveller's ear.
He heeded not the madden'd storm
As it pelted against his lofty form,
He felt no awe, no fear.
In contrast like the courser pale *
That stalks along Death's pitchy vale
With silent, with gigantic tread,
Trampling the dying and the dead.

Rising from her death-like trance,
Fair Rosa met the stranger's glance;
She started from his chilling gaze,
Wild was it as the tempest's blaze,
It shot a lurid gleam of light.
A secret spell of sudden dread,
A mystic, strange, and harrowing fear,
As when the spirits of the dead,
Drest in ideal shapes appear,
And hideous glance on human sight—
Scarce could Rosa's frame sustain
The chill that press'd upon her brain.

Anon that transient spell was o'er,
Dark clouds deform his brow no more,
But rapid fled away;
Sweet fascination dwelt around,
Mix'd with a soft, a silver sound,
As soothing to the ravish'd ear,
As what enthusiast lovers hear;
Which seems to steal along the sky,
When mountain mists are seen to fly,

* "Behold a pale horse, and his name that sat upon him was Death, and Hell followed with him."—*Revelations* vi. 8.

Before the approach of day.
He seized on wondering Rosa's hand,
"And, ah!" cried he, "be this the band
Shall join us, till this earthly frame
Sinks convulsed in bickering flame—
When around the demons yell,
And drag the sinful wretch to hell,
Then, Rosa, will we part—
Then fate, and only fate's decree
Shall tear thy lovely soul from me,
And rend thee from my heart.
Long has Paulo sought in vain
A friend to share his grief;—
Never will he seek again,
For the wretch has found relief,
Till the Prince of Darkness bursts his chain,
Till death and desolation reign—
Rosa, wilt thou then be mine?
Ever fairest, I am thine!"

He ceased, and on the howling blast,
Which wildly round the mountain past,
Died his accents low;
Yet fiercely howl'd the midnight storm
As Paulo bent his awful form,
And lean'd his lofty brow.

ROSA.

"Stranger, mystic stranger, rise;
Whence do these tumults fill the skies?
Who convey'd me, say, this night,
To this wild and cloud-capp'd height?
Who art thou? and why am I
Beneath Heaven's pitiless canopy?
For the wild winds roar around my head;
Lightnings redden the wave;—

Was it the power of the mighty dead,
Who live beneath the grave?
Or did the Abbess drag me here,
To make yon swelling surge my bier?"

PAULO.

"Ah, lovely Rosa! cease thy fear;
It was thy friend who bore thee here—
I, thy friend, till this fabric of earth,
Sinks in the chaos that gave it birth;
Till the meteor-bolt of the God above
Shall tear its victim from his love,—
That love which must unbroken last,
Till the hour of envious fate is past;
Till the mighty basements of the sky
In bickering hell-flames heated fly:
E'en then will I sit on some rocky height,
Whilst around lower clouds of eternal night,
E'en then will I loved Rosa save
From the yawning abyss of the grave;—
Or, into the gulf impetuous hurl'd—
If sinks, with its latest tenants, the world,
Then will our souls in union fly
Throughout the wide and boundless sky:
Then, free from th' ills that envious fate
Has heap'd upon our mortal state,
We'll taste ethereal pleasure,
Such as none but thou canst give,—
Such as none but I receive,
And rapture without measure."

As thus he spoke, a sudden blaze
Of pleasure mingled with his gaze:
Illumined by the dazzling light,
He glows with radiant lustre bright;
His features with new glory shine,
And sparkle as with beams divine.

"Strange, awful being," Rosa said,
"Whence is this superhuman dread,
That harrows up my inmost frame?
Whence does this unknown tingling flame
Consume and penetrate my soul?
By turns with fear and love possess'd,
Tumultuous thoughts swell high my breast;
A thousand wild emotions roll,
And mingle their resistless tide;
O'er thee some magic arts preside;
As by the influence of a charm,
Lull'd into rest my griefs subside,
And safe in thy protecting arm,
I feel no power can do me harm:
But the storm raves wildly o'er the sea—
Bear me away! I confide in thee!"

CANTO II.

"I could a tale unfold whose slightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine."—*Hamlet.*

THE horrors of the mighty blast,
The lowering tempest clouds were past,
Had sunk beneath the wain;
Light baseless mists were all that fled
Above the weary traveller's head,
As he left the spacious plain.

Fled were the vapours of the night,
Faint streaks of rosy-tinted light
Were painted on the matin grey;
And as the sun began to rise,

To pour his animating ray,
Glow'd with his fire the eastern skies,
The distant rocks—the far-off bay.
The ocean's sweet and lovely blue,
The mountain's variegated breast,
Blushing with tender tints of dawn,
Or with fantastic shadows drest.
The waving wood, the opening lawn,
Rose to existence, walk'd anew,
In colours exquisite of hue.
Their mingled charms Victorio view'd,
And lost in admiration stood.

From yesternight how changed the scene,
When howl'd the blast o'er the dark cliff's side,
And mingled with the madden'd roar
Of the wild surge that lash'd the shore.
To-day—scarce heard the whispering breeze,
And still and motionless the seas,
Scarce heard the murmuring of their tide;
All, all is peaceful and serene.
Serenely on Victorio's breast
It breathed a soft and tranquil rest,
Which bade each wild emotion cease,
And hush'd the passions into peace.

Along the winding Po he went;
His footsteps to the spot were bent
Where Paulo dwelt, his wander'd friend,
For thither did his wishes tend.
Noble Victorio's race was proud,
From Cosmo's blood he came;
To him a wild untutor'd crowd
Of vassals in allegiance bow'd,
Illustrious was his name;
Yet vassals and wealth he scorn'd, to go
Unnoticed with a man of woe;

Gay hope and expectation sate,
'Throned in his eager eye,
And ere he reach'd the castle gate,
The sun had mounted high.

Wild was the spot where the castle stood,
Its towers embosom'd deep in wood,
Gigantic cliffs with craggy steeps,
Rear'd their proud heads on high,
Their bases were wash'd by the foaming deeps,
Their summits were hid in the sky;
From the valley below they excluded the day,
That valley ne'er cheered by the sunbeam's ray;
Nought broke on the silence drear,
Save the hungry vultures darting by,
Or eagles yelling fearfully,
As they bore to the rocks their prey,
Or when the fell wolf ravening prowl'd,
Or the gaunt wild boar fiercely howl'd
His hideous screams on the night's dull ear.

Borne on pleasure's downy wing,
Downy as the breath of spring,
Not thus fled Paulo's hours away,
Though brighten'd by the cheerful day:
Friendship or wine, or softer love,
The sparkling eye, the foaming bowl,
Could with no lasting rapture move,
Nor still the tumults of his soul.
And yet there was in Rosa's kiss
A momentary thrill of bliss;
Oft the dark clouds of grief would fly,
Beneath the beam of sympathy;
And love and converse sweet bestow
A transient requiem from woe.—
Strange business and of import vast
On things which long ago were past

Drew Paulo oft from home;
Then would a darker, deeper shade,
By sorrow traced, his brow o'erspread,
And o'er his features roam.
Oft as they spent the midnight hour,
And heard the wintry wild winds rave
'Midst the roar and spray of the dashing wave,
Was Paulo's dark brow seen to lour.
Then, as the lamp's uncertain blaze
Shed o'er the hall its partial rays,
And shadows strange were seen to fall,
And glide upon the dusky wall,
Would Paulo start with sudden fear.
Why then unbidden gush'd the tear,
As he mutter'd strange words to the ear?—
Why frequent heaved the smother'd sigh?—
Why did he gaze on vacancy,
As if some strange form was near?
Then would the fillet of his brow
Fierce as a fiery furnace glow,
As it burn'd with red and lambent flame;
Then would cold shudderings seize his frame,
As gasping he labour'd for breath.
The strange light of his gorgon eye,
As frenzied and rolling dreadfully,
It glared with terrific gleam,
Would chill like the spectre gaze of death,
As conjured by feverish dream,
He seems o'er the sick man's couch to stand,
And shakes the dread lance in his skeleton hand.*

But when the paroxysm was o'er,
And clouds deform'd his brow no more,

* Nine or ten of the preceding lines, with some verbal differences, appear as a motto to the eighth chapter of *St. Irvyne*.— ED.

Would Rosa soothe his tumults dire,
Would bid him calm his grief,
Would quench reflection's rising fire,
And give his soul relief.
As on his form with pitying eye,
The ministering angel hung,
And wiped the drops of agony,
The music of her siren tongue
Lull'd forcibly his griefs to rest,
Like fleeting visions of the dead,
Or midnight dreams, his sorrows fled:
Waked to new life, through all his soul
A soft, delicious languor stole,
And, lapt in heavenly ecstasy,
He sank and fainted on her breast.

'Twas on an eve, the leaf was sere,
Howl'd the blast round the castle drear,
The boding night-bird's hideous cry
Was mingled with the warning sky;
Heard was the distant torrent's dash,
Seen was the lightning's dark-red flash,
As it gleam'd on the stormy cloud;
Heard was the troubled ocean's roar,
As its wild waves lash'd the rocky shore;
The thunder mutter'd loud,
As wilder still the lightnings flew;
Wilder as the tempest blew,
More wildly strange their converse grew:

They talk'd of the ghosts of the mighty dead,
If, when the spark of life were fled,
They visited this world of woe?
Or, were it but a phantasy,
Deceptive to the feverish eye,
When strange forms flash'd upon the sight,
And stalk'd along at the dead of night?

Or if, in the realms above,
They still, for mortals left below,
Retain'd the same affection's glow,
In friendship or in love?
Debating thus, a pensive train,
Thought upon thought began to rise;
Her thrilling wild harp Rosa took:
What sounds in softest murmurs broke
From the seraphic strings!
Celestials borne on odorous wings,
Caught the dulcet melodies,
The life-blood ebb'd in every vein,
As Paulo listen'd to the strain.

SONG.

What sounds are those that float upon the air,
As if to bid the fading day farewell,—
What form is that, so shadowy yet so fair,
Which glides along the rough and pathless dell?

Nightly those sounds swell full upon the breeze,
Which seems to sigh as if in sympathy;
They hang amid yon cliff-embosom'd trees,
Or float in dying cadence through the sky.

Now rests that form upon the moonbeam pale,
In piteous strains of woe its vesper sings;
Now, now it traverses the silent vale,
Borne on transparent ether's viewless wings.

Oft will it rest beside yon abbey's tower,
Which lifts its ivy-mantled mass so high;
Rears its dark head to meet the storms that lour,
And braves the trackless tempests of the sky.

That form, the embodied spirit of a maid,
Forced by a perjured lover to the grave;
A desperate fate the madden'd girl obey'd,
And from the dark cliff plunged into the wave.

There the deep murmurs of the restless surge,
The mournful shriekings of the white sea-mew,
The warring waves, the wild winds sang her dirge,
And o'er her bones the dark-red coral grew.

Yet though that form be sunk beneath the main,
Still rests her spirit where its vows were given;
Still fondly visits each loved spot again,
And pours its sorrows on the ear of Heaven.

That spectre wanders through the abbey dale,
And suffers pangs which such a fate must share:
Early her soul sank in death's darken'd vale,
And ere long all of us must meet her there.

She ceased, and on the listening ear
Her pensive accents died;
So sad they were, so softly clear,
It seem'd as if some angel's sigh
Had breathed the plaintive symphony:
So ravishingly sweet their close,
The tones awaken'd Paulo's woes;
Oppressive recollections rose,
And pour'd their bitter tide.

Absorb'd awhile in grief he stood;
At length he seem'd as one inspired,
His burning fillet blazed with blood—
A lambent flame his features fired.
"The hour is come, the fated hour;
Whence is this new, this unfelt power?—
Yes, I've a secret to unfold,
And such a tale as ne'er was told,
A dreadful, dreadful mystery!
Scenes, at whose retrospect e'en now
Cold drops of anguish on my brow,
The icy chill of death I feel:
Wrap, Rosa, bride, thy breast in steel,

Thy soul with nerves of iron brace,
As to your eyes I darkly trace
My sad, my cruel destiny.

"Victorio, lend your ears, arise,
Let us seek the battling skies,
With o'er our heads the thunder crashing,
And at our feet the wild waves dashing;
As tempests, clouds, and billows roll,
In gloomy concert with my soul.
Rosa, follow me—
For my soul is join'd to thine,
And thy being's linked to mine—
Rosa, list to me."

CANTO III.

"His form had not yet lost
All its original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than Archangel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscured; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
Sate on his faded cheek."—*Paradise Lost.*

PAULO.

"'TIS sixteen hundred years ago,
Sixteen hundred years of woe!—
Since I came from Israel's land;
With deep and furrowing hand,
God's mark is painted on my head;
Must there remain until the dead
Hear the last trump and leave the tomb,
And earth spouts fire from her riven womb

"How can I paint that dreadful day,
That time of terror and dismay,
When, for our sins, a Saviour died,
And the meek Lamb was crucified!

'Twas on that day, as borne along
To slaughter by the insulting throng,
Infuriate for Deicide,
I mock'd our Saviour, and I cried,
'Go! go!' 'Ah! I will go,' said he,
'Where scenes of endless bliss invite;
To the blest regions of the light
I go, but thou shalt here remain—
Thou diest not till I come again.'—
E'en now, by horror traced, I see
His perforated feet and hands;
The madden'd crowd around him stands.
Pierces his side the ruffian spear,
Big rolls the bitter anguish'd tear.
Hark, that deep groan!—He dies—he dies!
And breathes, in death's last agonies,
Forgiveness to his enemies.
Then was the noon-day glory clouded,
The sun in pitchy darkness shrouded.
Then were strange forms through the darkness gleaming,
And the red orb of night on Jerusalem beaming;
Which faintly, with ensanguined light,
Dispersed the thickening shades of night.
Convulsed, all nature shook with fear,
As if the very end was near;
Earth to her centre trembled;
Rent in twain was the temple's vail,
The graves gave up their dead;*
Whilst ghosts and spirits, ghastly pale,
Glared hideous on the sight,
Seen through the dark and lurid air,

* The *Fraser* version reads—

'Earth trembled as if the end was near.
Rent was the Temple's vail in twain—
The graves gave up their dead again."

As fiends array'd in light,
Threw on the scene a frightful glare,
And, howling, shriek'd with hideous yell—
They shriek'd in joy, for a Saviour fell!
'Twas then I felt the Almighty's ire;
Then full on my remembrance came
Those words despised alas! too late!
The horrors of my endless fate
Flash'd on my soul and shook my frame;
They scorch'd my breast as with a flame
Of unextinguishable fire;
An exquisitely torturing pain
Of frenzying anguish fired my brain.*
By keen remorse and anguish driven,
I call'd for vengeance down from Heaven.
But ah! the all-wasting hand of Time,
Might never wear away my crime!
I scarce could draw my fluttering breath—
Was it the appalling grasp of death?
I lay entranced, and deem'd he shed
His dews of poppy o'er my head;
But though the kindly warmth was dead,
The self-inflicted torturing pangs
Of conscience lent their scorpion fangs,
Still life prolonging after life was fled.

"Methought, what glories met my sight,
As burst a sudden blaze of light,
Illumining the azure skies,
I saw the blessed Saviour rise.

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* In the *Fraser* version the above nine lines are represented by these four:—

"'Twas then I felt the Almighty's ire—
Those words flashed on my soul, my frame,
Scorched breast and brain as with a flame
Of unextinguishable fire!"

But how unlike to him who bled!
Where then his thorn-encircled head?
Where the big drops of agony
Which dimm'd the lustre of his eye?
Or death-like hue that overspread
The features of that heavenly face?
Gone now was every mortal trace;
His eyes with radiant lustre beam'd—
His form confess'd celestial grace,
And with a blaze of glory stream'd.
Innumerable hosts around,
Their brows with wreaths immortal crown'd,
With amaranthine chaplets bound,
As on their wings the cross they bore,
Deep-dyed in the Redeemer's gore,
Attune their golden harps, and sing
Loud hallelujahs to their King.

"But, in an instant, from my sight,
Fled were the visions of delight.
Darkness had spread her raven pall,
Dank, lurid darkness cover'd all.
All was as silent as the dead;
I felt a petrifying dread,
Which harrow'd up my frame;
When suddenly a lurid stream
Of dark red light, with hideous gleam,
Shot like a meteor through the night,
And painted Hell upon the skies—
The Hell from whence it came.
What clouds of sulphur seem'd to rise!
What sounds were borne upon the air!
The breathings of intense despair—
The piteous shrieks—the wails of woe—
The screams of torment and of pain—
The red-hot rack—the clanking chain.
I gazed upon the gulf below,

Till, fainting from excess of fear,
My tottering knees refused to bear
My odious weight. I sink—I sink!
Already had I reach'd the brink,
The fiery waves disported wide,
To plunge me in their sulphurous tide;
When, rack'd by agonizing pain,
I started into life again.

"Yet still the impression left behind
Was deeply graven on my mind,
In characters whose inward trace
No change or time could e'er deface;
A burning cross illumed my brow,
I hid it with a fillet grey,
But could not hide the wasting woe
That wore my wilder'd soul away,
And ate my heart with living fire.
I knew it was the avenger's sway,
I felt it was the avenger's ire!

"A burden on the face of earth,
I cursed the mother who gave me birth;
I cursed myself—my native land.
Polluted by repeated crimes,
I sought in distant foreign climes
If change of country could bestow
A transient respite from my woe.
Vain from myself the attempt to fly,
Sole cause of my own misery.

"Since, when in death-like trance I lay,
Past, slowly past, the years away,
That pour'd a bitter stream on me,
When once I fondly long'd to see
Jerusalem, alas! my native place,
Jerusalem, alas! no more in name,

No portion of her former fame
Had left behind a single trace.
Her pomp—her splendour was no more.
Her towers no longer seem to rise,
To lift their proud heads to the skies.
Fane and monumental bust,
Long levell'd even with the dust,
The holy pavements were stain'd with gore.
The place where the sacred temple stood
Was crimson-dyed with Jewish blood.
Long since my parents had been dead;
All my posterity had bled
Beneath the dark Crusader's spear,
No friend was left my path to cheer,
To shed a few last setting rays
Of sunshine on my evening days!

"Rack'd by the tortures of the mind,
How have I long'd to plunge beneath
The mansions of repelling death!
And strove that resting place to find
Where earthly sorrows cease.
Oft, when the tempest-fiends engaged,
And the warring winds tumultuous raged,
Confounding skies with seas,
Then would I rush to the towering height
Of the gigantic Teneriffe,
Or some precipitous cliff,
All in the dead of the silent night.

"I have cast myself from the mountain's height,
Above was day—below was night;
The substantial clouds that lower'd beneath
Bore my detested form;
They whirl'd it above the volcanic breath,
And the meteors of the storm;

The torrents of electric flame
Scorch'd to a cinder my fated frame.
Hark to the thunder's awful crash—
Hark to the midnight lightning's hiss!
At length was heard a sullen dash,
Which made the hollow rocks around
Rebellow to the awful sound;
The yawning ocean opening wide,
Received me in its vast abyss,
And whelm'd me in its foaming tide.
Though my astounded senses fled,
Yet did the spark of life remain;
Then the wild surges of the main
Dash'd and left me on the rocky shore.
Oh! would that I had waked no more!
Vain wish! I lived again to feel
Torments more fierce than those of hell!
A tide of keener pain to roll,
And the bruises to enter my inmost soul!

"I cast myself in Etna's womb,
If haply I might meet my doom
In torrents of electric flame;
Thrice happy had I found a grave
'Mid fierce combustion's tumults dire,
'Mid oceans of volcanic fire,
Which whirl'd me in their sulphurous wave,
And scorch'd to a cinder my hated frame,
Parch'd up the blood within my veins,
And rack'd my breast with damning pains;
Then hurl'd me from the mountain's entrails dread.
With what unutterable woe
Even now I feel this bosom glow—
I burn—I melt with fervent heat—
Again life's pulses wildly beat—
What endless throbbing pangs I live to feel!

The elements respect their Maker's seal,—
That seal deep printed on my fated head.

"Still like the scathed pine-tree's height,
Braving the tempests of the night
Have I 'scaped the bickering fire,
Like the scathed pine which a monument stands
Of faded grandeur; which the brands
Of the tempest-shaken air
Have riven on the desolate heath,
Yet it stands majestic even in death,
And rears its wild form there.*
Thus have I 'scaped the ocean's roar,
The red-hot bolt from God's right hand,
The flaming midnight meteor brand,
And Etna's flames of bickering fire.
Thus am I doom'd by fate to stand,
A monument of the Eternal's ire;
Nor can this being pass away
Till time shall be no more.

"I pierce with intellectual eye
Into each hidden mystery;
I penetrate the fertile womb
Of nature; I produce to light
The secrets of the teeming earth,
And give air's unseen embryos birth:
The past, the present, and to come,
Float in review before my sight:
To me is known the magic spell
To summon e'en the Prince of Hell;
Awed by the Cross upon my head,
His fiends would obey my mandates dread,

* The above ten or eleven lines are quoted, with little variation, as a motto to the tenth chapter of *St. Irvyne*.—ED.

To twilight change the blaze of noon,
And stain with spots of blood the moon.
But that an interposing hand
Restrains my potent arts, my else supreme
command."

He raised his passion-quivering hand,
He loosed the grey encircling band,
A burning cross was there ;
Its colour was like to recent blood,
Deep mark'd upon his brow it stood,
And spread a lambent glare.
Dimmer grew the taper's blaze,
Dazzled by the brighter rays,
Whilst Paulo spoke—'twas dead of night—
Fair Rosa shudder'd with affright ;
Victorio, fearless, had braved death
Upon the blood-besprinkled heath ;
Had heard, unmoved, the cannon's roar,
Echoing along the Wolga's shore.
When the thunder of battle was swelling,
When the birds for their dead prey were yelling,
When the ensigns of slaughter were streaming,
And falchions and bayonets were gleaming,
And almost felt death's chilling hand
Stretch'd on ensanguined Wolga's strand,
And, careless, scorn'd for life to cry.
Yet now he turn'd aside his eye,
Scarce could his death-like terror bear,
And own'd now what it was to fear.

"Once a funeral met my aching sight,
It blasted my eyes at the dead of night,
When the sightless fiends of the tempests rave,
And hell-birds howl o'er the storm-blacken'd wave.
Nought was seen, save at fits, but the meteor's glare,
And the lightnings of God painted hell on the air ;

Nought was heard save the thunder's wild voice in the sky,
And strange birds who, shrieking, fled dismally by.
'Twas then from my head my drench'd hair that I tore,
And bade my vain dagger's point drink my life's gore;
'Twas then I fell on the ensanguined earth,
And cursed the mother who gave me birth!
My madden'd brain could bear no more—
Hark! the chilling whirlwinds roar;
The spirits of the tombless dead
Flit around my fated head,—
Howl horror and destruction round,
As they quaff my blood that stains the ground,
And shriek amid their deadly stave,—
'Never shalt thou find the grave!
Ever shall thy fated soul
In life's protracted torments roll,
Till, in latest ruin hurl'd,
And fate's destruction, sinks the world!
Till the dead arise from the yawning ground,
To meet their Maker's last decree,
Till angels of vengeance flit around,
And loud-yelling demons seize on thee!'

"Ah! would were come that fated hour,
When the clouds of Chaos around shall lower;
When the globe calcined by the fury of God
Shall sink beneath His wrathful nod!"

As thus he spake, a wilder gaze
Of fiend-like horror lit his eye,
With a most unearthly blaze,
As if some phantom-form pass'd by;
At last he still'd the maddening wail
Of grief, and thus pursued his tale:—

"Oft I invoke the fiends of hell,
And summon each in dire array—
I know they dare not disobey
My stern, my powerful spell.
—— Once on a night, when not a breeze
Ruffled the surface of the seas,
The elements were lull'd to rest,
And all was calm save my sad breast,
On death resolved—intent,
I mark'd a circle round my form;
About me sacred reliques spread,
The reliques of magicians dead,
And potent incantations read—
I waited their event.

"All at once grew dark the night,
Mists of swarthiness hung o'er the pale moonlight.
Strange yells were heard, the boding cry
Of the night raven that flitted by,
Whilst the silver-winged mew,
Startled with screams o'er the dark wave flew.
'Twas then I seized a magic wand,
The wand by an enchanter given,
And deep dyed in his heart's red blood.
The crashing thunder peal'd aloud;
I saw the portentous meteor's glare,
And the lightnings gleam o'er the lurid air;
I raised the wand in my trembling hand,
And pointed Hell's mark at the zenith of Heaven.

"A superhuman sound
Broke faintly on the listening ear,
Like to a silver harp the notes,
And yet they were more soft and clear.
I wildly strain'd my eyes around—
Again the unknown music floats.

Still stood Hell's mark above my head—
In wildest accents I summon'd the dead—
And through the insubstantial night,
It diffused a strange and fiendish light ;
Spread its rays to the charnel-house air,
And mark'd mystic forms on the dark vapours there.
The winds had ceased—a thick dark smoke
From beneath the pavement broke ;
Around ambrosial perfumes breathe
A fragrance grateful to the sense,
And bliss, past utterance, dispense.
The heavy mists encircling wreath
Disperse, and gradually unfold
A youthful female form ;—she rode
Upon a rosy-tinted cloud ;
Bright stream'd her flowing locks of gold ;
She shone with radiant lustre bright,
And blazed with strange and dazzling light
A diamond coronet deck'd her brow,
Bloom'd on her cheek a vermeil glow ;
The terrors of her fiery eye
Pour'd forth insufferable day,
And shed a wildly lurid ray.
A smile upon her features play'd,
And there, too, sate portray'd
The inventive malice of a soul
Where wild demoniac passions roll ;
Despair and torment on her brow
Had mark'd a melancholy woe
In dark and deepen'd shade.
Under those hypocritic smiles,
Deceitful as the serpent's wiles,
Her hate and malice were conceal'd ;
Whilst on her guilt-confessing face,
Conscience, the strongly printed trace

Of agony betray'd,
And all the fallen angel stood reveal'd.
She held a poniard in her hand,
The point was tinged by the lightning's brand;
In her left a scroll she bore,
Crimson'd deep with human gore;
And as above my head she stood,
Bade me smear it with my blood.
She said, that then it was my doom
That every earthly pang should cease;
The evening of my mortal woe
Would close beneath the yawning tomb;
And, lull'd into the arms of death,
I should resign my labouring breath;
And in the sightless realms below
Enjoy an endless reign of peace.
She ceased—oh! God! I thank thy grace,
Which bade me spurn the deadly scroll;
Uncertain for a while I stood—
The dagger's point was in my blood,
Even now I bleed!—I bleed!
When suddenly what horrors flew,
Quick as the lightnings, through my frame;
Flash'd on my mind the infernal deed,
The deed which would condemn my soul
To torments of eternal flame.
Drops colder than the cavern dew,
Quick coursed each other down my face,
I labour'd for my breath;
At length I cried, 'Avaunt! thou fiend of Hell
Avaunt! thou minister of death!'
I cast the volume on the ground,
Loud shriek'd the fiend with piercing yell,
And more than mortal laughter peal'd around.
The scatter'd fragments of the storm
Floated along the demon's form,

Dilating till it touch'd the sky ;
The clouds that roll'd athwart his eye,
Reveal'd by its terrific ray,
Brilliant as the noontide day,
Gleam'd with a lurid fire ;
Red lightnings darted around his head,
Thunders hoarse as the groans of the dead,
Pronounced their Maker's ire ;
A whirlwind rush'd impetuous by,
Chaos of horror fill'd the sky :
I sunk convulsed with awe and dread.
When I waked the storm was fled,
But sounds unholy met my ear,
And fiends of hell were flitting near.

" Here let me pause—here end my tale,
My mental powers begin to fail ;
At this short retrospect I faint :
Scarce beats my pulse—I lose my breath,
I sicken even unto death.
Oh ! hard would be the task to paint
And gift with life past scenes again ;
To knit a long and linkless chain,
Or strive minutely to relate
The varied horrors of my fate.
Rosa ! I could a tale disclose,
So full of horror—full of woes,
Such as might blast a demon's ear,
Such as a fiend might shrink to hear—
But, no."——

Here ceased the tale. Convulsed with fear,
The tale yet lived in Rosa's ear—
She felt a strange mysterious dread,
A chilling awe as of the dead ;
Gleam'd on her sight the demon's form,
Heard she the fury of the storm ?

The cries and hideous yells of death?
Totter'd the ground her feet beneath?
Was it the fiend before her stood?
Saw she the poniard drop with blood?
All seem'd to her distemper'd eye
A true and sad reality.

* * * * * *

CANTO IV.

Οὔτοι γυναῖκας, ἀλλὰ Γοργόνας λέγω·
οὐδ' αὖτε Γοργείοισιν εἰκάσω τύποις·
——— μέλαιναι δ' ες τὸ πᾶν βδελυκτροποι·
ῥέγκουσι δ'οὐ πλαστοῖσι φησιάμασιν·
ἐκ δ'ομμάτων λείβουσι δυσφιλῆ βίαν.
—*Æschylus, Eumenides*, v. 48.

"——— What are ye,
So wither'd and so wild in your attire,
That look not like th' inhabitants of earth,
And yet are on't?—Live you, or are you aught
That man may question?"—*Macbeth.*

AH! why does man, whom God has sent
As the Creation's ornament,
Who stands amid his works confess'd
The first—the noblest—and the best;
Whose vast, whose comprehensive eye,
Is bounded only by the sky,
O'erlook the charms which Nature yields,
The garniture of woods and fields,
The sun's all vivifying light,
The glory of the moon by night,
And to himself alone a foe,
Forget from whom these blessings flow?
And is there not in friendship's eye,
Beaming with tender sympathy,
An antidote to every woe?

And cannot woman's love bestow
An heavenly paradise below?
Such joys as these to man are given,
And yet you dare to rail at Heaven;
Vainly oppose the Almighty Cause,
Transgress His universal laws;
Forfeit the pleasures that await
The virtuous in this mortal state;
Question the goodness of the Power on high,
In misery life, despairing die.
What then is man, how few his days,
And heighten'd by what transient rays,
Made up of plans of happiness,
Of visionary schemes of bliss,
The varying passions of his mind
Inconstant, varying as the wind;
Now hush'd to apathetic rest,
Now tempested with storms his breast;
Now with the fluctuating tide
Sunk low in meanness, swoln with pride,
Thoughtless, or overwhelm'd with care,
Hoping, or tortured by despair!

The sun had sunk beneath the hill,
Soft fell the dew, the scene was still;
All nature hail'd the evening's close.
Far more did lovely Rosa bless
The twilight of her happiness.
Even Paulo blest the tranquil hour,
As in the aromatic bower,
Or wandering through the olive grove,
He told his plaintive tale of love;
But welcome to Victorio's soul
Did the dark clouds of evening roll!
But ah! what means his hurried pace.
Those gestures strange, that varying face;

Now pale with mingled rage and ire,
Now burning with intense desire ;
That brow where brood the imps of care,
That fix'd expression of despair,
That haste, that labouring for breath—
His soul is madly bent on death.
A dark resolve is in his eye,
Victorio raves—I hear him cry,
"Rosa is Paulo's eternally."
But whence is that soul-harrowing moan,
Deep drawn and half-suppress'd—
A low and melancholy tone,
That rose upon the wind ?
Victorio wildly gazed around,
He cast his eyes upon the ground,
He raised them to the spangled air,
But all was still—was quiet there.
Hence, hence this superstitious fear ;
'Twas but the fever of his mind
That conjured the ideal sound,
To his distemper'd ear.

With rapid step, with frantic haste,
He scour'd the long and dreary waste ;
And now the gloomy cypress spread
Its darken'd umbrage o'er his head ;
The stately pines above him high,
Lifted their tall heads to the sky ;
Whilst o'er his form the poisonous yew
And melancholy nightshade threw
Their baleful deadly dew.
At intervals the moon shone clear ;
Yet passing o'er her disk, a cloud
Would now her silver beauty shroud.
The autumnal leaf was parch'd and sere ;
It rustled like a step to fear,

The precipice's battled height
Was dimly seen through the mists of night,
As Victorio moved along.
At length he reach'd its summit dread,
The night-wind whistled round his head
A wild funereal song.
A dying cadence swept around
Upon the waste of air,
It scarcely might be call'd a sound,
For stillness yet was there,
Save when the roar of the waters below
Was wafted by fits to the mountain's brow.
Here for a while Victorio stood
Suspended o'er the yawning flood,
And gazed upon the gulf beneath.
No apprehension paled his cheek,
No sighs from his torn bosom break,
No terror dimm'd his eye.
"Welcome, thrice welcome, friendly death,"
In desperate, harrowing tone he cried,
"Receive me, ocean, to your breast,
Hush this ungovernable tide,
This troubled sea to rest.
Thus do I bury all my grief—
This plunge shall give my soul relief,
This plunge into eternity!"
I see him now about to spring
Into the watery grave:
Hark! the death angel flaps his wing
O'er the blacken'd wave.
Hark! the night-raven shrieks on high
To the breeze which passes on;
Clouds o'ershade the moonlight sky—
The deadly work is almost done—
When a soft and silver sound,
Softer than the fairy song

Which floats at midnight hour along
The daisy-spangled ground,
Was borne upon the wind's soft swell.
Victorio started—'twas the knell
Of some departed soul ;
Now on the pinion of the blast,
Which o'er the craggy mountain past,
The lengthen'd murmurs roll—
Till, lost in ether, dies away
The plaintive, melancholy lay.
'Tis said congenial sounds have power
To dissipate the mists that lour
Upon the wretch's brow—
To still the maddening passions' war—
To calm the mind's impetuous jar—
To turn the tide of woe.
Victorio shudder'd with affright,
Swam o'er his eyes thick mists of night ;
Even now he was about to sink
Into the ocean's yawning womb,
But that the branches of an oak,
Which, riven by the lightning's stroke,
O'erhung the precipice's brink,
Preserved him from the billowy tomb.
Quick throbb'd his pulse with feverish heat,
He wildly started on his feet,
And rush'd from the mountain's height.

The moon was down, but through the air
Wild meteors spread a transient glare,
Borne on the wing of the swelling gale,
Above the dark and woody dale,
Thick clouds obscured the sky.
All was now wrapp'd in silence drear,
Not a whisper broke on the listening ear,
Not a murmur floated by.

In thought's perplexing labyrinth lost,
The trackless heath he quickly crost.
Ah! why did terror blanch his cheek?
Why did his tongue attempt to speak,
And fail in the essay?
Through the dark midnight mists, an eye,
Flashing with crimson brilliancy,
Pour'd on his face its ray.
What sighs pollute the midnight air?
What mean those breathings of despair?
Thus ask'd a voice, whose hollow tone
Might seem but one funereal moan.
Victorio groan'd, with faltering breath,
"I burn with love, I pant for death!"

Suddenly a meteor's glare,
With brilliant flash illumed the air;
Bursting through clouds of sulphurous smoke,
As on a Witch's form it broke:
Of herculean bulk her frame
Seem'd blasted by the lightning's flame;
Her eyes that flared with lurid light,
Were now with bloodshot lustre fill'd.
They blazed like comets through the night,
And now thick rheumy gore distill'd;
Black as the raven's plume, her locks
Loose stream'd upon the pointed rocks;
Wild floated on the hollow gale,
Or swept the ground in matted trail;
Vile loathsome weeds, whose pitchy fold
Were blacken'd by the fire of Hell,
Her shapeless limbs of giant mould
Scarce served to hide—as she the while
"Grinn'd horribly a ghastly smile,"
And shriek'd with demon yell.

Terror unmann'd Victorio's mind,
His limbs, like lime-leaves in the wind,
Shook, and his brain in wild dismay
Swam—vainly he strove to turn away.
"Follow me to the mansions of rest,"
The weird female cried;
The life-blood rush'd thro' Victorio's breast
In full and swelling tide.
Attractive as the eagle's gaze,
And bright as the meridian blaze,
Led by a sanguine stream of light,
He follow'd through the shades of night—
Before him his conductress fled,
As swift as the ghosts of the dead,
When on some dreadful errand they fly
In a thunderblast sweeping the sky.

They reach'd a rock whose beetling height
Was dimly seen through the clouds of night;
Illumined by the meteor's blaze,
Its wild crags caught the redden'd rays,
And their refracted brilliance threw
Around a solitary yew,
Which stretch'd its blasted form on high,
Braving the tempests of the sky.
As glared the flame—a cavern'd cell,
More pitchy than the shades of hell,
Lay open to Victorio's view.
Lost for an instant was his guide;
He rush'd into the mountain side.
At length, with deep and harrowing yell,
She bade him quickly speed,
For that ere again had risen the moon
'Twas fated that there must be done
A strange—a deadly deed.

Swift as the wind Victorio sped ;
Beneath him lay the mangled dead ;
Around dank putrefaction's power
Had caused a dim blue mist to lour.
Yet an unfix'd, a wandering light,
Dispersed the thickening shades of night.
Yet the weird female's features dire
Gleam'd through the lurid yellow air ;
With a deadly livid fire,
Whose wild, inconstant, dazzling light
Dispell'd the tenfold shades of night,
Whilst her hideous fiendlike eye,
Fix'd on her victim with horrid stare,
Flamed with more kindled radiancy ;
More frightful far than that of Death,
When exulting he stalks o'er the battle heath ;
Or of the dread prophetic form,
Who rides the curl'd clouds in the storm,
And borne upon the tempest's wings,
Death, despair, and horror brings.
Strange voices then and shrieks of death
Were borne along the trackless heath ;
Totter'd the ground his steps beneath ;
Rustled the blast o'er the dark cliff's side,
And their works unhallow'd spirits plied,
As they shed their baneful breath.

Yet Victorio hasten'd on—
Soon the dire deed will be done.
" Mortal," the female cried, "this night
Shall dissipate thy woe ;
And, ere return of morning light,
The clouds that shade thy brow,
Like fleeting summer mists shall fly
Before the sun that mounts on high.

I know the wishes of thy heart—
A soothing balm I could impart:
Rosa is Paulo's—could be thine,
For the secret power is mine."

Victorio. "Give me that secret power—Oh! give
To me fair Rosa—I will live
To bow to thy command.
Rosa but mine—and I will fly
E'en to the regions of the sky,
Will traverse every land."

Witch. "Calm then those transports and attend,
Mortal, to one, who is thy friend—
The charm begins."
An ancient book
Of mystic characters she took;
Her loose locks floated on the air;
Her eyes were fix'd in lifeless stare:
She traced a circle on the floor,
Around dank chilling vapours lower;
A golden cross in the pavement she threw,
'Twas tinged with a flame of lambent blue,
From which bright scintillations flew;
By it she cursed her Saviour's soul;
Around strange fiendish laughs did roll,
A hollow, wild, and frightful sound,
At fits was heard to float around.
She utter'd then, in accents dread,
Some maddening rhyme that wakes the dead,
And forces every shivering fiend
To her their demon forms to bend;
At length, a wild and piercing shriek,
As the dark mists disperse and break,

Announced the coming Prince of Hell—
His horrid form obscured the cell.
Victorio shrunk, unused to shrink,
E'en at extremest danger's brink;
The witch then pointed to the ground,
Infernal shadows flitted around,
And with their prince were seen to rise,
The cavern bellows with their cries,
Which echoing through a thousand caves,
Sound like as many tempest waves.*

Inspired and wrapt in bickering flame,
The strange, the awful being stood.
Words, unpremeditated, came,
In unintelligible flood,
From her black, tumid lips,—array'd
In livid fiendish smiles of joy;
Lips, which now dropp'd with deadly dew,
And now extending wide, display'd
Projecting teeth of mouldy hue,
As with a loud and piercing cry,
A mystic harrowing lay she sang,
The rocks, as with a death-peal, rang,

* This passage appears thus in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*:

"But when his form obscured the cell,
What words could paint, what tongue could tell,
The terrors of his look!
The witch's heart, unused to shrink
Even at extremest danger's brink,
With deadliest terror shook!
And with their Prince were seen to rise
Spirits of every shape and hue,—
A hideous and infernal crew,
With hell-fires flashing from their eyes.
The cavern bellows with their cries,
Which, echoing through a thousand caves,
Sound like as many tempest-waves."

And the dread accents, deep and drear,
Struck terror on the dark night's ear!

As ceased the soul-appalling verse,
Obedient to its power, grew still
The hellish shrieks;—the mists disperse;—
Satan—a shapeless, hideous beast—
In all his horrors stood confest!
And as his vast proportions fill
The lofty cave, his features dire
Gleam with a pale and sulphurous fire;
From his fixed glance of deadly hate
Even *she* shrunk back, appall'd with dread—
For there contempt and malice sate,
And from his basiliskine eye
Sparks of living fury fly,
Which wanted but a being to strike dead.

* * * * * *

A wilder, a more awful spell
Now echo'd through the long-drawn cell;
The demon bow'd to its mandates dread.
"Receive this potent drug," he cried,
"Whoever quaffs its fatal tide,
Is mingled with the dead."
Swept by a rushing sulphurous blast,
Which wildly through the cavern past,
The fatal word was borne.
The cavern trembled with the sound,
Trembled beneath his feet the ground,
With strong convulsions torn,
Victorio, shuddering, fell;
But soon awakening from his trance,
He cast around a fearful glance,
Yet gloomy was the cell,
Save where a lamp's uncertain flare
Cast a flickering, dying glare.

Witch. "Receive this dear-earn'd drug—its power
Thou, mortal, soon shalt know:
This drug shall be thy nuptial dower,
This drug shall seal thy woe.
Mingle it with Rosa's wine,
Victorio—Rosa then is thine."
She spake, and, to confirm the spell,
A strange and subterranean sound
Reverberated long around,
In dismal echoes—the dark cell
Rock'd as in terror—thro' the sky
Hoarse thunders murmur'd awfully,
And wing'd with horror, darkness spread
Her mantle o'er Victorio's head.
He gazed around with dizzy fear,
No fiend, no witch, no cave was near;
But the blasts of the forest were heard to roar,
The wild ocean's billows to dash on the shore.
The cold winds of Heaven struck chill on his frame,
For the cave had been heated by hell's blackening flame,
And his hand grasp'd a casket—the philtre was there!

* * * * * *

Sweet is the whispering of the breeze
Which scarcely sways yon summer trees;
Sweet is the pale moon's pearly beam,
Which sleeps upon the silver stream,
In slumber cold and still:
Sweet those wild notes of harmony,
Which on the blast that passes by,
Are wafted from yon hill:
So low, so thrilling, yet so clear,
Which strike enthusiast fancy's ear;
Which sweep along the moonlight sky,
Like notes of heavenly symphony.

SONG.

See yon opening flower
Spreads its fragrance to the blast;
It fades within an hour,
Its decay is pale, is fast.
Paler is yon maiden;
Faster is her heart's decay;
Deep with sorrow laden,
She sinks in death away.

* * * * * *

'Tis the silent dead of night—
Hark! hark! what shriek so low yet clear,
Breaks on calm rapture's pensive ear,
From Lara's castled height?
'Twas Rosa's death-shriek fell!
What sound is that which rides the blast,
As onward its fainter murmurs past?
'Tis Rosa's funeral knell!
What step is that the ground which shakes?
'Tis the step of a wretch, nature shrinks from his tread;
And beneath their tombs tremble the shuddering dead;
And while he speaks the churchyard quakes.

Paulo. "Lies she there for the worm to devour?
Lies she there till the judgment hour?
Is then my Rosa dead?
False fiend! I curse thy futile power!
O'er her form will lightnings flash,
O'er her form will thunders crash,
But harmless from my head
Will the fierce tempest's fury fly,
Rebounding to its native sky.

Who is the God of mercy?—where
Enthrones the power to save?
Reigns he above the viewless air?
Lives he beneath the grave?
To him would I lift my suppliant moan,
That power should hear my harrowing groan;
Is it then Christ's terrific Sire?
Ah! I have felt his burning ire,—
Wild anguish glooms my brow;
His flaming mark is fixed on my head,
And must there remain in traces dread;
I feel—I feel it now!
Oh! griefs like mine that fiercely burn,
Where is the balm can heal!
Where is the monumental urn
Can bid to dust this frame return,
Or quench the pangs I feel!"

As thus he spoke, grew dark the sky,
Hoarse thunders murmur'd awfully,
"O Demon! I am thine!" he cried.
A hollow, fiendish voice replied,
"Come! for thy doom is misery!"

QUEEN MAB;

A

PHILOSOPHICAL POEM:

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

ECRASEZ L'INFAME!

Correspondance de Voltaire.

Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante
Trita solo; juvat integros accedere fonteis;
Atque haurire: juratque novos decerpere flores.
* * * * * *
Unde prius nulli velarint tempora musæ.
Primum quod magnis doceo de rebus; et arctis
Religionum animos nodis exsolvere pergo.

Lucret. lib. iv.

Δος πε ϛῶ, και κοσμον κινησω.

Archimedes.

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TO HARRIET * * * * *

WHOSE is the love that, gleaming through the world,
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
Whose is the warm and partial praise
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
And loved mankind the more?

Harriet! on thine :—thou wert my purer mind;
Thou wert the inspiration of my song;
Thine are these early wilding flowers,
Though garlanded by me.

Then press unto thy breast this pledge of love;
And know, though time may change and years may roll,
Each floweret gather'd in my heart
It consecrates to thine.

QUEEN MAB.

I.

HOW wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world:
Yet both so passing wonderful!

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow
That lovely outline, which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
Chaseth into darkness?
Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from her smile?

Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence,
That might have soothed a tiger's rage,
Or thaw'd the cold heart of a conqueror.
Her dewy eyes are closed,
And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillow'd:
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'Tis like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,
Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
The enthusiast hears at evening:
'Tis softer than the west wind's sigh;
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Of that strange lyre whose strings
The genii of the breezes sweep:
Those lines of rainbow light
Are like the moonbeams when they fall
Through some cathedral window, but the teints
Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
And stop obedient to the reins of light:
These the Queen of spells drew in,
She spread a charm around the spot,

And leaning graceful from the ethereal car,
Long did she gaze, and silently,
Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh ! not the vision'd poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float thro' the wilder'd brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand
Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
When fancy at a glance combines
The wondrous and the beautiful,—
So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
Hath ever yet beheld,
As that which rein'd the coursers of the air,
And pour'd the magic of her gaze
Upon the maiden's sleep.

The broad and yellow moon
Shone dimly through her form—
That form of faultless symmetry ;
The pearly and pellucid car
Moved not the moonlight's line :
'Twas not an earthly pageant :
Those who had look'd upon the sight,
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That fill'd the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight, yon fibrous cloud,
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight ; but the fair star

That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Sway'd to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car
The Fairy Queen descended,
And thrice she waved her wand
Circled with wreaths of amaranth:
Her thin and misty form
Moved with the moving air,
And the clear silver tones,
As thus she spoke, were such
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY.

Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
Elements! your wrath suspend!
Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
That circle thy domain!
Let not a breath be seen to stir
Around yon grass-grown ruin's height,
Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air!
Soul of Ianthe! thou,
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon,
That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquish'd earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains
The icy chains of custom, and have shone
The day-stars of their age;—Soul of Ianthe!
Awake! arise!

Sudden arose
Ianthe's Soul; it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,

The perfect semblance of its bodily frame.
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace,
Each stain of earthliness
Had pass'd away, it reassumed
Its native dignity, and stood
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay
Wrapt in the depth of slumber:
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet perform'd
Its natural functions: 'twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and soul.
The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity were there:
Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
And ever changing, ever rising still,
Wantons in endless being.
The other, for a time the unwilling sport
Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;
Then like an useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.

FAIRY.

Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
Spirit! who hast soar'd so high;
Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earn'd,
Ascend the car with me.

SPIRIT.

Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a vision'd ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a soul,
A free, a disembodied soul,
Speak again to me.

FAIRY.

I am the fairy MAB: to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep:
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find.
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather: not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man;
Not that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregister'd by me:
And it is yet permitted me, to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace, which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!

The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthe's spirit;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a waken'd giant's strength.
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontroll'd
New raptures opening round:
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seem'd now to meet reality.

The Fairy and the Soul proceeded;
The silver clouds disparted;

And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swell'd,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurl'd their azure pennons, and the Queen
Shaking the beamy reins
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault,—
Just o'er the eastern wave
Peep'd the first faint smile of morn :—
The magic car moved on—
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lower'd o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness shew'd
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.
Seem'd it, that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,

And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approach'd their goal
The coursers seem'd to gather speed;
The sea no longer was distinguish'd; earth
Appear'd a vast and shadowy sphere;
The sun's unclouded orb
Roll'd through the black concave;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
Dash'd from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appear'd
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven;
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems roll'd,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder: some
Were horned like the crescent moon;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea;
Some dash'd athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like suns, and as the chariot pass'd,
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here!
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf

That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee :
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature ! thou !
Imperishable as this scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

II.

F solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast linger'd there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seem'd resting on the burnish'd wave,
Thou must have mark'd the lines
Of purple gold, that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere :
Thou must have mark'd the billowy clouds
Edged with intolerable radiancy
Towering like rocks of jet
Crown'd with a diamond wreath.
And yet there is a moment,
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea ;
Then has thy fancy soar'd above the earth,
And furl'd its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
Gleaming in yon flood of light,
Nor the feathery curtains

Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
Nor the burnish'd ocean waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's ethereal palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that faery Hall!
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea;
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Look'd o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Enter'd the Hall of Spells:
Those golden clouds
That roll'd in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy
With the ethereal footsteps, trembled not:
The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will.
Upon their passive swell the Spirit lean'd,
And, for the varied bliss that press'd around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom.

Spirit! the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
This is a wondrous sight
And mocks all human grandeur;
But, were it virtue's only meed, to dwell

In a celestial palace, all resign'd
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless nature would be unfulfill'd.
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come!
This is thine high reward:—the past shall rise;
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
The secrets of the future.

The Fairy and the Spirit
Approach'd the overhanging battlement.—
Below lay stretch'd the universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That bounds imagination's flight,
Countless and unending orbs
In mazy motion intermingled,
Yet still fulfill'd immutably
Eternal nature's law.
Above, below, around
The circling systems form'd
A wilderness of harmony;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance:
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb;
None but a spirit's eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.
But matter, space and time
In those aërial mansions cease to act;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds

Those obstacles, of which an earthly soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
The Spirit's intellectual eye
Its kindred beings recognized.
The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
Seemed like an anthill's citizens.
How wonderful! that even
The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being, the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve,
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of nature.

Behold, the Fairy cried,
Palmyra's ruin'd palaces!—
Behold! where grandeur frown'd;
Behold! where pleasure smiled;
What now remains?—the memory
Of senselessness and shame—
What is immortal there?
Nothing—it stands to tell
A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning: soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.
Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod—
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.

Beside the eternal Nile,
The Pyramids have risen.
Nile shall pursue his changeless way;

Those pyramids shall fall;
Yea! not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood;
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name!

Behold yon sterile spot;
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert-blast.
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Rear'd high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.

Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth,
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone, and poisoning
The choicest days of life,
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howl'd hideous praises to their Demon-God;
They rush'd to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child,—old age and infancy
Promiscuous perish'd: their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were fiends:
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now:

The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,
Now crumbling to oblivion ;
The long and lonely colonnades,
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remember'd now in sadness.
But, oh ! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there !
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around—
Then, shuddering, meets his own.
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
A cowl'd and hypocritical monk
Prays, curses and deceives.

Spirit ! ten thousand years
Have scarcely past away,
Since, in the waste where now the savage drinks
His enemy's blood, and aping Europe's sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war,
Arose a stately city,
Metropolis of the western continent :
There, now, the mossy column-stone,
Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,
Which once appear'd to brave
All, save its country's ruin ;
There the wide forest scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,
Seems to the unwilling sojourner, whose steps
Chance in that desert has delay'd,
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.

Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
Whither, as to a common centre, flock'd
Strangers, and ships, and merchandize :
Once peace and freedom blest
The cultivated plain :
But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity :
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
Fled, to return not, until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

There's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man ;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud
But flow'd in human veins :
And from the burning plains
Where Lybian monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

How strange is human pride !
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass,
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world ;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,

Think, feel and live like man ;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state ;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fix'd and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstacy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view ;
Yet dim from their infinitude.
The Spirit seem'd to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle ;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

III.

FAIRY ! the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of spells
Fix'd her ethereal eyes,
I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearn'd. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean

A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors, and derive
Experience from his folly :
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven.

MAB.

Turn thee, surpassing Spirit !
Much yet remains unscann'd.
Thou know'st how great is man,
Thou know'st his imbecility :
Yet learn thou what he is ;
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless time prepares
For every living soul.

Behold a gorgeous palace, that, amid
Yon populous city, rears its thousand towers
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of sentinels, in stern and silent ranks,
Encompass it around : the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy ; hear'st thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend ? He passes on :
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites—that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury ; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine : when he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face

Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur, and excess, he drags
His pall'd unwilling appetite. If gold,
Gleaming around, and numerous viands cull'd
From every clime, could force the loathing sense
To overcome satiety,—if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons not,—or vice,
Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
His unforced task, when he returns at even,
And by the blazing faggot meets again
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now
Stretch'd on the gorgeous couch; his fever'd brain
Reels dizzily awhile: but ah! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye—
Oh! mark that deadly visage.

KING.

No cessation!
Oh! must this last for ever! Awful death,
I wish, yet fear to clasp thee!—Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep! O dear and blessed peace!
Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons? wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude; yet shunn'st
The palace I have built thee? Sacred peace!

Oh visit me but once, but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my wither'd soul.

Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;
His slumbers are but varied agonies,
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err: earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure;
And all-sufficing Nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law,—she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.

Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison, whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ? No—'tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquer'd powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue. Stranger yet,
To those who know not nature, nor deduce
The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being; not one wretch,
Whose children famish, and whose nuptial bed

Is earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!

Those gilded flies
That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
Fatten on its corruption!—what are they?
—The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labour: the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labour a protracted death,
To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil,
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, think'st thou, kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones, who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces, and bring
Their daily bread?—From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder.....And when reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war, and misery; that virtue
Is peace, and happiness and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood;—kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle; its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame
Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
The unsubstantial bubble. Ay! to-day
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes!
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed, and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,
Who, great in his humility, as kings
Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good,
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
More free and fearless than the trembling judge,
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit;—when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more:
Wither'd the hand outstretch'd but to relieve;
Sunk reason's simple eloquence, that roll'd
But to appal the guilty. Yes! the grave
Hath quench'd that eye, and death's relentless frost
Wither'd that arm: but the unfading fame
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb;
The deathless memory of that man, whom kings
Call to their mind and tremble; the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
The subject, not the citizen: for kings

And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands,
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame,
A mechanized automaton.

When Nero,
High over flaming Rome, with savage joy
Lower'd like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new created sense within his soul
Thrill to the sight, and vibrate to the sound:
Think'st thou his grandeur had not overcome
The force of human kindness? and, when Rome,
With one stern blow, hurl'd not the tyrant down,
Crush'd not the arm red with her dearest blood,
Had not submissive abjectness destroy'd
Nature's suggestions?

Look on yonder earth:
The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony, and love. The universe,
In nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy,—
All but the outcast man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant, whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,

Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch,
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons, who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood, and mar,
In self-important childishness, that peace
Which men alone appreciate?

Spirit of Nature! no.
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart.
Thou, aye, erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable:
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by.
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The show of human justice,
As God surpasseth man.

Spirit of Nature! thou
Life of interminable multitudes;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths thro' Heaven's deep silence lie;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam;—
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth:
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely come;
And the unbounded frame, which thou pervadest,

Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry.

IV.

OW beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love had spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills,
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend,
So stainless, that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep,
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly, that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;—all form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where silence undisturb'd might watch alone,
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day,
In southern climes, o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling: not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day:
And Hesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blacken'd waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom

That shrouds the boiling surge ; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey ;
The torn deep yawns,—the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah ! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of heaven ?—that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon ? The stars are quench'd
In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round !
Hark to that roar, whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale midnight on her starry throne !
Now swells the intermingling din ; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb ;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangor, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage :—loud, and more loud
The discord grows ; till pale death shuts the scene,
And o'er the conqueror and the conquer'd draws
His cold and bloody shroud.—Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there,
In proud and vigorous health ; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sunset there,
How few survive, how few are beating now !
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause ;
Save when the frantic wail of widow'd love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapt round its struggling powers.

The grey morn
Dawns on the mournful scene ; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance

Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scatter'd arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors : far behind,
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen—
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit !—wert thou human else ?
I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features : yet fear not;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused, and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumber'd crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings, and priests, and statesmen, war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbetter'd woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall ;
And where its venom'd exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,
That form'd this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,

That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathom'd main,
And fill'd the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought, and love; on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heap'd ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor-happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare,
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?

Nature!—no!
Kings, priests, and statesmen, blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant-arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright reason's ray, and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when force
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement, and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How wither'd all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms

Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame,
Poison'd, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heap'd on the wretched parent whence it sprung
By morals, law, and custom, the pure winds
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being: all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
Curs'd from its birth, even from its cradle doom'd
To abjectness and bondage!

Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element, the block
That for uncounted ages has remain'd.
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active, living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds; these beget
Evil and good: hence truth and falsehood spring,
Hence will and thought and action, all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams
Of heaven's pure orb, ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

Man is of soul and body, form'd for deeds
Of high resolve, on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield.
Or he is form'd for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,

To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blest when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And, to those royal murderers, whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garb'd in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes
That force defends, and from a nation's rage
Secures the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe, and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne—the bullies of his fear:
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile: their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villainous, with rage
Which hopelessness of good, and self-contempt,
Alone might kindle; they are deck'd in wealth,
Honour and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold,
And promises of fame, the thoughtless youth
Already crush'd with servitude: he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is seal'd in gold and blood!

Those too the tyrant serve, who, skill'd to snare
The feet of justice in the toils of law,
Stand, ready to oppress the weaker still;
And, right or wrong, will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled, where
Honour sits smiling at the sale of truth.

Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honours flow....
They have three words:—well tyrants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan, with usury
Torn from a bleeding world!—God, Hell, and Heaven
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nick-name for the rage
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness: the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.

They rise, they fall; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms: yet behold!

Red glows the tyrant's stamp mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

Look to thyself, priest, conqueror, or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy master was:—or thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale
Against thy short-lived fame: or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Ay, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawl'd on the loathing earth? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
When will the morning come? Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?
Are not thy views of unregretted death
Drear, comfortless, and horrible? Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope, or love?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold'st in their protraction? When the grave
Has swallow'd up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy coffin'd clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

V.

THUS do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world ; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scatter'd on the forest soil, and heap'd
For many seasons there, though long they choke,
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise. Yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deform'd,
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity, and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.

Twin-sister of religion, selfishness !
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
The wanton horrors of her bloody play ;
Yet frozen, unimpassion'd, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name,
Compell'd, by its deformity, to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right,
Its unattractive lineaments, that scare
All, save the brood of ignorance : at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny ;
Unblushing, harden'd, sensual, and vile ;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness,

With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame ;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears to disenthral.

Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or nature yield ;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
For ever stifled, drain'd, and tainted now.
Commerce ! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring,
But poverty and wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death,
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,
Which poison'd body and soul, scarce drags the chain.
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power
Upon a shining ore, and call'd it gold :
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god, and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

Since tyrants, by the sale of human life,
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanction'd to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.

His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers : from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery ;—
Harden'd to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pullies of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth !

The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations ; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is barter'd for the poison of his soul ;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprize and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,—
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeem'd
Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth ! The wordy eloquence that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe,
Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol fame,
From virtue, trampled by its iron tread,
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
With desolated dwellings smoking round

The man of ease, who, by his warm fire-side,
To deeds of charitable intercourse
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice, confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry ; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,—when his son
Is murder'd by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man,
Whose life is misery, and fear, and care ;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil ;
Who ever hears his famish'd offspring's scream,
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
For ever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself ;—he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny ; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs ; he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrain'd but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

The iron rod of penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has past by,

Stilling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care!
How many a vulgar Cato has compell'd
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin, or fabricate a nail!
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel, fix'd in heaven
To light the midnights of his native town!

Yet every heart contains perfection's germ:
The wisest of the sages of the earth,
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
Proud, sensual, unimpassion'd, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love,
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,
Which death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence, and beneath
His changeless eyebeam,) might alone subdue.
Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime,
To move the deep stagnation of his soul,—
Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight around the earth,
That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal: gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefix'd by selfishess, to all

But him of resolute and unchanging will ;
Whom, nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To tyranny or falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

All things are sold : the very light of heaven
Is venal ; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold ; the solace of all woe
Is turn'd to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce ; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has fill'd
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience ; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith :
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain,
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.

More daring crime requires a loftier meed:
Without a shudder, the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature, whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of a patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,—viler still!

There is a nobler glory, which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And, in the precincts of the palace, guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when, from power's avenging hand, he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title—death;
—The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain,
Whose ever wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.

This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No mediative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weigh'd,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,
And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek
The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and harden'd, they,
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give,—
Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust, and lassitude, pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
Its death-blow, and is tottering to the grave:
A brighter morn awaits the human day,
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell
Shall live but in the memory of time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.

VI.

ALL touch, all eye, all ear,
The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
O'er the thin texture of its frame,
The varying periods painted changing glows,
As on a summer even,
When soul-enfolding music floats around,
The stainless mirror of the lake
Re images the eastern gloom,

Mingling convulsively its purple hues
With sunset's burnish'd gold.

Then thus the Spirit spoke :
It is a wild and miserable world !
Thorny, and full of care,
Which every fiend can make his prey at will.
O Fairy ! in the lapse of years,
Is there no hope in store?
Will yon vast suns roll on
Interminably, still illuming
The night of so many wretched souls,
And see no hope for them ?
Will not the universal Spirit e'er
Revivify this wither'd limb of Heaven ?

The Fairy calmly smiled
In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
Oh ! rest thee tranquil ; chase those fearful doubts.
Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul,
That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.
Yes ! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake, and lust ;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time :
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.
How sweet a scene will earth become !
Of purest spirits, a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres ;
When man, with changeless nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration's work,
When its ungenial poles no longer point

To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

Spirit ! on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs ; deadly power
Has fix'd its seal upon the lip of truth !
Madness and misery are there !
The happiest is most wretched ! Yet confide,
Until pure health-drops, from the cup of joy,
Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.
Now, to the scene I shew, in silence turn,
And read the blood-stain'd charter of all woe,
Which nature soon, with recreating hand,
Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.
How bold the flight of passion's wandering wing,
How swift the step of reason's firmer tread,
How calm and sweet the victories of life,
How terrorless the triumph of the grave !
How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm.
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown !
How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar !
The weight of his exterminating curse,
How light ! and his affected charity,
To suit the pressure of the changing times,
What palpable deceit !—but for thy aid,
Religion ! but for thee, prolific fiend,
Who peoplest earth with demons, hell with men,
And heaven with slaves !

Thou taintest all thou look'st upon !—the stars,
Which on thy cradle beam'd so brightly sweet,
Were gods to the distemper'd playfulness
Of thy untutor'd infancy : the trees,
The grass, the clouds, the mountains, and the sea.
All living things that walk, swim, creep, or fly,
Were gods : the sun had homage, and the moon

Her worshipper. Then thou becamest, a boy,
More daring in thy frenzies : every shape,
Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild,
Which, from sensation's relics, fancy culls ;
The spirits of the air, the shuddering ghost,
The genii of the elements, the powers
That give a shape to nature's varied works,
Had life and place in the corrupt belief
Of thy blind heart : yet still thy youthful hands
Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave
Its strength and ardour to thy frenzied brain ;
Thine eager gaze scann'd the stupendous scene,
Whose wonders mock'd the knowledge of thy pride :
Their everlasting and unchanging laws
Reproach'd thine ignorance. Awhile thou stood'st
Baffled and gloomy : then thou didst sum up
The elements of all that thou didst know ;
The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign,
The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,
The eternal orbs that beautify the night,
The sunrise, and the setting of the moon,
Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
And all their causes, to an abstract point
Converging, thou didst bend, and call'd it GOD ! *
The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
The merciful, and the avenging God !
Who, prototype of human misrule, sits
High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
Even like an earthly king ; and whose dread work,
Hell, gapes for ever for the unhappy slaves

* The thirty-one preceding lines were reproduced by Shelley years later, under the title of *Superstition*, in the volume of *A and other Poems* (1815), where the conclusion stands as follows:

And all their causes to an abstract point
Converging, thou didst give it name, and form,
Intelligence, and unity and power.

Of fate, whom he created in his sport,
To triumph in their torments when they fell!
Earth heard the name; earth trembled, as the smoke
Of his revenge ascended up to heaven,
Blotting the constellations; and the cries
Of millions, butcher'd in sweet confidence
And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
Of safety were confirm'd by wordy oaths
Sworn in his dreadful name, rung through the land;
Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel
Felt cold in her torn entrails!

Religion! thou wert then in manhood's prime;
But age crept on: one God would not suffice
For senile puerility; thou framedst
A tale to suit thy dotage, and to glut
Thy misery-thirsting soul, that the mad fiend
Thy wickedness had pictured, might afford
A plea for sating the unnatural thirst
For murder, rapine, violence, and crime,
That still consumed thy being, even when
Thou heard'st the step of fate;—that flames might light
Thy funeral scene, and the shrill horrent shrieks
Of parents dying on the pile that burn'd
To light their children to thy paths, the roar
Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries
Of thine apostles, loud commingling there,
Might sate thine hungry ear
Even on the bed of death!

But now contempt is mocking thy grey hairs!
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,
Unhonour'd and unpitied, but by those
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds.

Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
That long has lower'd above the ruin'd world.

Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation, or decay ;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguish'd in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractised sense :
But, active, stedfast, and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease ;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe, and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill ;
So that, when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-forest
Whilst, to the eye of shipwreck'd mariner,
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlink'd contingency and chance :
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light,
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
Fulfils its destined, though invisible work,
The universal Spirit guides ; nor less,

When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,
And call the sad work glory, does it rule
All passions : not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
Their servitude, to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecognised, or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe ! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
Whose chains and massy walls
We feel, but cannot see.

Spirit of Nature ! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity ! thou mother of the world !
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requirest no prayers or praises ; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony : the slave,
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
And the good man, who lifts, with virtuous pride,
His being, in the sight of happiness,
That springs from his own works ; the poison-tree
Beneath whose shade all life is wither'd up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are register'd, are equal in thy sight :
No love, no hate thou cherishest ; revenge

And favoritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
  Because thou hast not human sense,
  Because thou art not human mind.

  Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruin'd fanes
And broken altars of the almighty fiend,
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
Through centuries clotted there, has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is raised to thee,
  Which, nor the tempest breath of time,
  Nor the interminable flood,
  Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
    Availeth to destroy,—
The sensitive extension of the world,
  That wondrous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
To do the will of strong necessity,
  And life, in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
  Like hungry and unresting flame
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength.

VII.

SPIRIT.

I WAS an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burn'd. She took me there:
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit pass'd with dauntless mien,

Temper'd disdain in his unaltering eye,
Mix'd with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth:
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorch'd to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob
Utter'd a cry of triumph, and I wept.
Weep not, child! cried my mother, for that man
Has said, There is no God.

FAIRY.

There is no God!
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan seal'd:
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations tell their tale;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term! let every seed that falls
In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument: infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains
Is nature's only God; but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance.

The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness,
Himself the creature of his worshippers,
Whose names and attributes and passions change,
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord,
Even with the human dupes who build his shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watch-word; whether hosts
Stain his death-blushing chariot wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;

Or countless partners of his power divide
His tyranny to weakness ; or the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
Unarm'd old age, and youth, and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honour of his name ; or, last and worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house !

O Spirit ! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised
Of outward shews, vague dreams have roll'd,
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade ;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

These are my empire, for to me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
And fancy's thin creations to endow
With manner, being, and reality ,
Therefore a wondrous phantom, from the dreams
Of human error's dense and purblind faith,
I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
Ahasuerus, rise !

A strange and woe-worn wight
Arose beside the battlement,
And stood unmoving there.
An inessential figure cast no shade

Upon the golden floor;
His port and mien bore mark of many years,
And chronicles of untold ancientness
Were legible within his beamless eye:
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigour knit his manly frame;
The wisdom of old age was mingled there
With youth's primeval dauntlessness;
And inexpressible woe,
Chasten'd by fearless resignation, gave
An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT.

Is there a God?

AHASUERUS.

Is there a God!—ay, an almighty God,
And vengeful as almighty! Once his voice
Was heard on earth: earth shudder'd at the sound;
The fiery-visaged firmament express'd
Abhorrence, and the grave of nature yawn'd
To swallow all the dauntless and the good
That dared to hurl defiance at his throne,
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
Survived,—cold-blooded slaves, who did the work
Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls
No honest indignation ever urged
To elevated daring, to one deed
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent fiend,
Gorgeous and vast: the costly altars smoked
With human blood, and hideous pæans rung
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard
His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
Had raised him to his eminence in power,
Accomplice of omnipotence in crime,
And confidant of the all-knowing one.
These were Jehovah's words.

From an eternity of idleness
I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
From nothing; rested, and created man:
I placed him in a paradise, and there
Planted the tree of evil, so that he
Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
Wherewith to sate its malice, and to turn,
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
All misery to my fame. The race of men
Chosen to my honour, with impunity
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
Until, with harden'd feet, their conquering troops
Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,
And make my name be dreaded through the land.
Yet ever burning flame and ceaseless woe
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong,—even all
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
(Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.

The murderer's brow
Quiver'd with horror.

God omnipotent,
Is there no mercy? must our punishment
Be endless? will long ages roll away,
And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast thou made
In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
Mercy becomes the powerful—be but just:
O God! repent and save.

One way remains:
I will beget a son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world; he shall arise
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,

And there shall die upon a cross, and purge
The universal crime ; so that the few
On whom my grace descends, those who are mark'd
As vessels to the honour of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice, and save
Their souls alive : millions shall live and die,
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name
But, unredeem'd, go to the gaping grave.
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal :
These in a gulf of anguish and of flame
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,
Even on their beds of torment, where they howl,
My honour, and the justice of their doom.
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
Of purity, with radiant genius bright,
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are call'd, but few will I elect.
Do thou my bidding, Moses !

Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanch'd with horror, and his quivering lips
Scarce faintly utter'd—O almighty one,
I tremble and obey !

O Spirit ! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came : humbly he came,
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorn'd by the world, his name unheard,
Save by the rabble of his native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd ; he taught them justice, truth, and peace,
In semblance ; but he lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blest the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood

Of truth and freedom his malignant soul.
At length his mortal frame was led to death.
I stood beside him: on the torturing cross
No pain assail'd his unterrestrial sense;
And yet he groan'd. Indignantly I summ'd
The massacres and miseries which his name
Had sanction'd in my country, and I cried,
Go! go! in mockery.
A smile of godlike malice reillumined
His fading lineaments.—I go, he cried,
But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
Eternally.——The dampness of the grave
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,
And long lay tranced upon the charmed soil.
When I awoke hell burn'd within my brain,
Which stagger'd on its seat; for all around
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,
Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,
And in their various attitudes of death
My murder'd children's mute and eyeless skulls
Glared ghastily upon me.

But my soul,
From sight and sense of the polluting woe
Of tyranny, had long learn'd to prefer
Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven.
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began
My lonely and unending pilgrimage,
Resolved to wage unwearіable war
With my almighty tyrant, and to hurl
Defiance at his impotence to harm
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand
That barr'd my passage to the peaceful grave
Has crush'd the earth to misery, and given
Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.
These have I seen, even from the earliest dawn

Of weak, unstable and precarious power ;
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war,
So, when they turn'd but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels, to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood
That flow'd in their own veins, and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling, as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love ;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught waged,
Drunk from the winepress of the Almighty's wrath ;
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory ! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguish'd pile.

Yes ! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe
The sword of his revenge, when grace descended,
Confirming all unnatural impulses,
To sanctify their desolating deeds ;
And frantic priests waved the ill-omen'd cross
O'er the unhappy earth : then shone the sun
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
Of safe assassination, and all crime
Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.

Spirit ! no year of my eventful being
Has pass'd unstain'd by crime and misery,
Which flows from God's own faith. I've mark'd his slaves
With tongues whose lies are venomous, beguile
The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was red

With murder, feign to stretch the other out
For brotherhood and peace ; and that they now
Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
Are mark'd with all the narrowness and crime
That freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise.
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now
Establishing the imperishable throne
Of truth, and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
The unprevailing malice of my foe,
Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,
Adds impotent eternities to pain,
Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast
To see the smiles of peace around them play,
To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

Thus have I stood,—through a wild waste of years
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,
Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse
With stubborn and unalterable will,
Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame
Had scathed in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there ;
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
Its worn and wither'd arms on high
To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.*

The Fairy waved her hand :
Ahasuerus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove,

* Shelley had before made use of this image, in words very similar, in his poem of *The Wandering Jew;* a fragment of which was prefixed to one of the chapters of *St. Irvyne.*—Ed.

Flee from the morning beam :
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endow'd with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

VIII.

THE present and the past thou hast beheld :
It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn
The secrets of the future.—Time !
Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
And from the cradles of eternity,
Where millions lie lull'd to their portion'd sleep
By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
Tear thou that gloomy shroud.—Spirit, behold
Thy glorious destiny !

Joy to the Spirit came.
Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear ;
Earth was no longer hell ;
Love, freedom, health, had given
Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
And all its pulses beat
Symphonious to the planetary spheres :
Then dulcet music swell'd
Concordant with the life-strings of the soul ;
It throbb'd in sweet and languid beatings there,
Catching new life from transitory death,—
Like the vague sighings of a wind at even,
That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
And dies on the creation of its breath,
And sinks and rises, fails and swells by fits :

Was the pure stream of feeling
That sprung from these sweet notes,
And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
With mild and gentle motion calmly flow'd.

Joy to the Spirit came,—
Such joy as when a lover sees
The chosen of his soul in happiness,
And witnesses her peace
Whose woe to him were bitterer than death,
Sees her unfaded cheek
Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
Thrills with her lovely eyes,
Which like two stars amid the heaving main
Sparkle through liquid bliss.

Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen:
I will not call the ghost of ages gone
To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore;
The present now is past,
And those events that desolate the earth
Have faded from the memory of Time,
Who dares not give reality to that
Whose being I annul. To me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
Space, matter, time, and mind. Futurity
Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
Where virtue fixes universal peace,
And midst the ebb and flow of human things,
Shew somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
A lighthouse o'er the wild of dreary waves.

The habitable earth is full of bliss;
Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurl'd
By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,

Where matter dared not vegetate or live,
But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed ;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is waken'd into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves
And melodize with man's blest nature there.

Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervours scarce allow'd
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Corn-fields and pastures and white cottages ;
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stain'd in kindred blood,
A tigress sating with the flesh of lambs,
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang,
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sun-rise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet.

Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain,
Morning on night, and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind

In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes,
But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm,
Now to the sweet and many mingling sounds
Of kindliest human impulses respond.
Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
Which like a toil-worn labourer leaps to shore,
To meet the kisses of the flowerets there.

All things are recreated, and the flame
Of consentaneous love inspires all life :
The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
Rewarding her with their pure perfectness :
The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
Her virtues, and diffuse them all abroad :
Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
Glows in the fruits, and mantles on the stream :
No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
The foliage of the ever verdant trees ;
But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
Reflects its tint and blushes into love.

The lion now forgets to thirst for blood :
There might you see him sporting in the sun
Beside the dreadless kid ; his claws are sheathed,
His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
His nature as the nature of a lamb.

Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane
Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows:
All bitterness is past; the cup of joy
Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim,
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.

But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each;
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burthen or the glory of the earth;
He chief perceives the change, his being notes
The gradual renovation, and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.

Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darken'd with the night;
His chill'd and narrow energies, his heart,
Insensible to courage, truth, or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Mark'd him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roam'd around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own:
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfill'd,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reach'd;
His death a pang which famine, cold and toil
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought:
All was inflicted here that earth's revenge

Could wreak on the infringers of her law;
One curse alone was spared—the name of God.

Nor where the tropics bound the realms of day
With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scatter'd the seeds of pestilence, and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teem'd with all earthquake, tempest and disease,
Was man a nobler being; slavery
Had crush'd him to his country's bloodstain'd dust;
Or he was barter'd for the fame of power,
Which all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold,
And dragg'd to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge, he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe;
Or he was led to legal butchery,
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun,
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men,
And priests first traded with the name of God.

Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumber'd ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth till late
Avail'd to arrest its progress, or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favour'd clime:
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.

Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake
All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age,
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremember'd vision, stands
Immortal upon earth: no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which still avenging nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humours in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease and crime.
No longer now the winged habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror: man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals: happiness
And science dawn though late upon the earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfetter'd o'er the earth extend

Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,
Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its paradise of peace.

IX.

HAPPY Earth! reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire;
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly-working will!
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend forever there:
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place!
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease, and ignorance dare not come:
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams,
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,
The product of all action; and the souls
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reach'd thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
That hoary giant, who, in lonely pride,

So long had ruled the world, that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for milleniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heap'd them there.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-winged footstep press'd to dust:
Time was the king of earth: all things gave way
Before him, but the fix'd and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mock'd his fury and prepared his fall.
Yet slow and gradual dawn'd the morn of love;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native heaven they roll'd away:
First, crime triumphant o'er all hope career'd
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong;
Whilst falsehood, trick'd in virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering passion's fearless wing,
Nor searing reason with the brand of God.
Then steadily the happy ferment work'd;
Reason was free; and wild though passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosom'd meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who meek and sober kiss'd the sportive child,
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

Mild was the slow necessity of death:
The tranquil Spirit fail'd beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,

Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and purity
Blest with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride, or care,
Had stamp'd the seal of grey deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth!
Which meek-eyed courage deck'd with freshest grace:
Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,
And elevated will, that journey'd on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love, and pleasure, hand in hand.

Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self
And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law:
Those delicate and timid impulses
In nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubting confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Uncheck'd by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
Poison'd the springs of happiness and life;
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal and free and pure together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stain'd with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mock'd

Famine's faint groan, and penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo ; and the leaves
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurp'd the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that sway'd the topmost tower
And whisper'd strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.

Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung :
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal !
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall.
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life : to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children play'd,
Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower,
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom ;
The ponderous chains, and gratings of strong iron,
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone
That mingled slowly with their native earth :
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness :
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Peal'd through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-finger'd winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.

These ruins soon left not a wreck behind :
Their elements, wide scatter'd o'er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses :
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthen'd in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in stedfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done :
Thy lore is learn'd. Earth's wonders are thine own,
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are past : the present now recurs.
Ah me ! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

Yet, human Spirit, bravely hold thy course,
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change :
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal :
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
Of outward shews, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend ;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe ;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.

Therefore, O Spirit ! fearlessly bear on :
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth,
To feed with kindliest dews its favourite flower,
That blooms in mossy banks and darksome glens,
Lighting the green wood with its sunny smile.

Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns ;
'Tis but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to virtue : earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of vision'd bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of link'd and gradual being has confirm'd ?
Whose stingings bade thy heart look further still,
When to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death ?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore ?
Never : but bravely bearing on, thy will
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease :
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,

When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received: virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile.

The fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That roll'd beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked,
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew:
The vast and fiery globes that roll'd
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessen'd by slow degrees, and soon appear'd
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrow'd light pursued their narrower way.
Earth floated then below:
The chariot paused a moment there;
The Spirit then descended:
The restless coursers paw'd the ungenial soil,
Snuff'd the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurl'd their pinions to the winds of heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then,
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame:

Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remain'd:
She look'd around in wonder and beheld
Henry, who kneel'd in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

NOTES TO "QUEEN MAB."

Page 92.

The sun's unclouded orb
Roll'd through the black concave.

BEYOND our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8′ 7″ in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles. Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars, when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000

miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.

Page 92.

Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems roll'd.

The plurality of worlds, the indefinite immensity of the universe is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur, is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine, begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman; or is angered at the consequences of that necessity, which is a synonym of itself. All that miserable tale of the Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the Jews, is irreconcilable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of his fingers have borne witness against him.

The nearest of the fixed stars is inconceivably distant from the earth, and they are probably proportionably distant from each other. By a calculation of the velocity of light, Sirius is supposed to be at least 54,224,000,000,000 miles from the earth.* That which appears only like a thin and silvery cloud streaking the heaven, is in effect composed of innumerable clusters of suns, each shining with its own light, and illuminating numbers of planets that revolve around them. Millions and millions of suns are ranged around us, all attended by innumerable worlds, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, all keeping the paths of immutable necessity.

* See Nicholson's Encyclopædia, art. Light.

Page 113.

These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne.

To employ murder as a means of justice, is an idea which a man of an enlightened mind will not dwell upon with pleasure. To march forth in rank and file, and all the pomp of streamers and trumpets, for the purpose of shooting at our fellow-men as a mark; to inflict upon them all the variety of wound and anguish; to leave them weltering in their blood; to wander over the field of desolation, and count the number of the dying and the dead, —are employments which in thesis we may maintain to be necessary, but which no good man will contemplate with gratulation and delight. A battle we suppose is won:—thus truth is established;—thus the cause of justice is confirmed! It surely requires no common sagacity to discern the connexion between this immense heap of calamities, and the assertion of truth, or the maintenance of justice.

Kings, and ministers of state, the real authors of the calamity, sit unmolested in their cabinet, while those against whom the fury of the storm is directed, are, for the most part, persons who have been trepanned into the service, or who are dragged unwillingly from their peaceful homes into the field of battle. A soldier is a man whose business it is to kill those who never offended him, and who are the innocent martyrs of other men's iniquities. Whatever may become of the abstract question of the justifiableness of war, it seems impossible that the soldier should not be a depraved and unnatural being.

To these more serious and momentous considerations it may be proper to add a recollection of the ridiculousness of the military character. Its first constituent is obedience: a soldier is, of all descriptions of men, the most completely a machine; yet his profession inevitably

teaches him something of dogmatism, swaggering, and self-consequence: he is like the puppet of a showman who, at the very time he is made to strut and swell and display the most farcical airs, we perfectly know cannot assume the most insignificant gesture, advance either to the right or the left, but as he is moved by his exhibitor. —*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay V.*

I will here subjoin a little poem, so strongly expressive of my abhorrence of despotism and falsehood, that I fear lest it never again may be depictured so vividly. This opportunity is perhaps the only one that ever will occur of rescuing it from oblivion.

FALSEHOOD AND VICE.

A DIALOGUE.

Whilst monarchs laugh'd upon their thrones
To hear a famish'd nation's groans,
And hugg'd the wealth wrung from the woe
That makes its eyes and veins o'erflow, —
Those thrones, high built upon the heaps
Of bones where frenzied famine sleeps,
Where slavery wields her scourge of iron,
Red with mankind's unheeded gore,
And war's mad fiends the scene environ,
Mingling with skrieks a drunken roar,
There Vice and Falsehood took their stand,
High raised above the unhappy land.

Falsehood. Brother! arise from the dainty fare,
Which thousands have toil'd and bled to bestow;
A finer feast for thy hungry ear
Is the news that I bring of human woe.

Vice. And, secret one, what hast thou done,
To compare, in thy tumid pride, with me?
I, whose career, through the blasted year,
Has been track'd by despair and agony.

Falsehood. What have I done!—I have torn the robe
From baby truth's unshelter'd form,
And round the desolated globe
Borne safely the bewildering charm:
My tyrant-slaves to a dungeon-floor
Have bound the fearless innocent,
And streams of fertilizing gore
Flow from her bosom's hideous rent,
Which this unfailing dagger gave——
I dread that blood!—no more—this day
Is ours, though her eternal ray
Must shine upon our grave.
Yet know, proud Vice, had I not given
To thee the robe I stole from heaven,
Thy shape of ugliness and fear
Had never gain'd admission here.

Vice. And know, that had I disdain'd to toil,
But sate in my loathsome cave the while,
And ne'er to these hateful sons of heaven,
GOLD, MONARCHY, and MURDER given:
Hadst thou with all thine art essay'd
One of thy games then to have play'd,
With all thine overweening boast,
Falsehood! I tell thee thou hadst lost!—
Yet wherefore this dispute?—we tend,
Fraternal, to one common end;
In this cold grave beneath my feet,
Will our hopes, our fears, and our labours meet.

Falsehood. I brought my daughter, RELIGION, on earth:
She smother'd Reason's babes in their birth;
But dreaded their mother's eye severe,—
So the crocodile slunk off slily in fear,
And loosed her bloodhounds from the den——
They started from dreams of slaughter'd men,
And, by the light of her poison eye,
Did her work o'er the wide earth frightfully:

The dreadful stench of her torches' flare,
Fed with human fat, polluted the air:
The curses, the shrieks, the ceaseless cries
Of the many-mingling miseries,
As on she trod, ascended high
And trumpeted my victory!—
Brother, tell what thou hast done.

Vice. I have extinguish'd the noon-day sun,
In the carnage-smoke of battles won:
Famine, murder, hell, and power,
Were glutted in that glorious hour
Which searchless fate had stamp'd for me
With the seal of her security——
For the bloated wretch on yonder throne
Commanded the bloody fray to rise:
Like me he joy'd at the stifled moan
Wrung from a nation's miseries;
While the snakes, whose slime even him *defiled*,
In ecstasies of malice smiled:
They thought 'twas theirs,—but mine the deed!
Theirs is the toil, but mine the meed—
Ten thousand victims madly bleed.
They dream that tyrants goad them there
With poisonous war to taint the air:
These tyrants, on their beds of thorn,
Swell with the thoughts of murderous fame,
And with their gains to lift my name.
Restless they plan from night to morn:
I—I do all; without my aid
Thy daughter, that relentless maid,
Could never o'er a death-bed urge
The fury of her venom'd scourge.

Falsehood. Brother, well:—the world is ours;
And whether thou or I have won,
The pestilence expectant lours
On all beneath yon blasted sun.

Our joys, our toils, our honours meet
In the milk-white and wormy winding-sheet:
A short-lived hope, unceasing care,
Some heartless scraps of godly prayer,
A moody curse, and a frenzied sleep
Ere gapes the graves unclosing deep,
A tyrant's dream, a coward's start,
The ice that clings to a priestly heart,
A judge's frown, a courtier's smile,
Make the great whole for which we toil:
And, brother, whether thou or I
Have done the work of misery,
It little boots: thy toil and pain,
Without my aid were more than vain;
And but for thee I ne'er had sate
The guardian of heaven's palace gate.

Page 116.

Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave, and issue from the womb.

One generation passeth away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south and turneth about unto the north, it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither shall they return again.—*Ecclesiastes*, chap. i.

Even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scatter'd on the forest soil.

Οἵη περ φύλλων γενεὴ, τοιήδε καὶ ανδρῶν.
Φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη
Τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη·
Ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ, ἡ μὲν φύει ἡδ' ἀπολήγει.

ΙΔΙΑΔ. Ζ'. l. 146.

The mob of peasants, nobles, priests, and kings.

Suave mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis
E terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem;
Non quia vexari quemquam 'st jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave 'st
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri,
Per campos instructa, tua sine parte pericli;
Sed nil dulcius est bene quam munita tenere
Edita doctrina sapientum templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ;
Certare ingenio; contendere nobilitate;
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.
O miseras hominum menteis! O pectora cæca!

Luc. lib. ii.

Page 118.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth!

There is no real wealth but the labour of man. Were the mountains of gold, and the valleys of silver, the world would not be one grain of corn the richer; no one comfort would be added to the human race. In conse-

quence of our consideration for the precious metals, one man is enabled to heap to himself luxuries at the expense of the necessaries of his neighbour; a system admirably fitted to produce all the varieties of disease and crime, which never fail to characterise the two extremes of opulence and penury. A speculator takes pride to himself as the promoter of his country's prosperity, who employs a number of hands in the manufacture of articles avowedly destitute of use, or subservient only to the unhallowed cravings of luxury and ostentation. The nobleman, who employs the peasants of his neighbourhood in building his palaces, until "*jam pauca aratro jugera, regiæ moles relinquunt*," flatters himself that he has gained the title of a patriot by yielding to the impulses of vanity. The show and pomp of courts adduce the same apology for its continuance; and many a fête has been given, many a woman has eclipsed her beauty by her dress, to benefit the labouring poor and to encourage trade. Who does not see that this is a remedy which aggravates, whilst it palliates the countless diseases of society? The poor are set to labour,—for what? Not the food for which they famish: not the blankets for want of which their babes are frozen by the cold of their miserable hovels: not those comforts of civilization without which civilized man is far more miserable than the meanest savage; oppressed as he is by all its insidious evils, within the daily and taunting prospect of its innumerable benefits assiduously exhibited before him:—no; for the pride of power, for the miserable isolation of pride, for the false pleasures of the hundredth part of society. No greater evidence is afforded of the wide extended and radical mistakes of civilized man than this fact: those arts which are essential to his very being are held in the greatest contempt; employments are lucrative in an inverse ratio to their usefulness*: the

* See Rousseau, "De l'Inégalité parmi les Hommes," note 7.

jeweller, the toyman, the actor gains fame and wealth by the exercise of his useless and ridiculous art; whilst the cultivator of the earth, he without whom society must cease to subsist, struggles through contempt and penury, and perishes by that famine which, but for his unceasing exertions, would annihilate the rest of mankind.

I will not insult common sense by insisting on the doctrine of the natural equality of man. The question is not concerning its desirableness, but its practicability: so far as it is practicable, it is desirable. That state of human society which approaches nearer to an equal partition of its benefits and evils should, *cæteris paribus*, be preferred: but so long as we conceive that a wanton expenditure of human labour, not for the necessities, not even for the luxuries of the mass of society, but for the egotism and ostentation of a few of its members, is defensible on the ground of public justice, so long we neglect to approximate to the redemption of the human race.

Labour is required for physical, and leisure for moral improvement: from the former of these advantages the rich, and from the latter the poor, by the inevitable condition of their respective situations, are precluded. A state which should combine the advantages of both, would be subjected to the evils of neither. He that is deficient in firm health, or vigorous intellect, is but half a man: hence it follows, that, to subject the labouring classes to unnecessary labour, is wantonly depriving them of any opportunities of intellectual improvement; and that the rich are heaping up for their own mischief the disease, lassitude and *ennui* by which their existence is rendered an intolerable burthen.

English reformers exclaim against sinecures,—but the true pension-list is the rent-roll of the landed proprietors; wealth is a power usurped by the few, to compel the many to labour for their benefit. The laws which sup-

port this system derive their force from the ignorance and credulity of its victims: they are the result of a conspiracy of the few against the many, who are themselves obliged to purchase this pre-eminence by the loss of all real comfort.

The commodities that substantially contribute to the subsistence of the human species form a very short catalogue: they demand from us but a slender portion of industry. If these only were produced, and sufficiently produced, the species of man would be continued. If the labour necessarily required to produce them were equitably divided among the poor, and, still more, if it were equitably divided among all, each man's share of labour would be light, and his portion of leisure would be ample. There was a time when this leisure would have been of small comparative value: it is to be hoped that the time will come, when it will be applied to the most important purposes. Those hours which are not required for the production of the necessaries of life, may be devoted to the cultivation of the understanding, the enlarging our stock of knowledge, the refining our taste, and thus opening to us new and more exquisite sources of enjoyment.

* * * * * *

It was perhaps necessary that a period of monopoly and oppression should subsist, before a period of cultivated equality could subsist. Savages perhaps would never have been excited to the discovery of truth and the invention of art, but by the narrow motives which such a period affords. But, surely, after the savage state has ceased, and men have set out in the glorious career of discovery and invention, monopoly and oppression cannot be necessary to prevent them from returning to a

state of barbarism.—*Godwin's Enquirer, Essay II. See also Pol. Jus., book VIII. chap.* 11.

It is a calculation of this admirable author, that all the conveniences of civilized life might be produced, if society would divide the labour equally among its members, by each individual being employed in labour two hours during the day.

Page 119.

Or religion
Drives his wife raving mad.

I am acquainted with a lady of considerable accomplishments, and the mother of a numerous family, whom the Christian religion has goaded to incurable insanity. A parallel case is, I believe, within the experience of every physician.

Nam jam sæpe homines patriam, carosque parentes
Prodiderunt, vitare Acherusia templa petentes.

LUCRETIUS.

Page 121.

Even love is sold.

Not even the intercourse of the sexes is exempt from the despotism of positive institution. Law pretends even to govern the indisciplinable wanderings of passion, to put fetters on the clearest deductions of reason, and, by appeals to the will, to subdue the involuntary affections of our nature. Love is inevitably consequent upon the perception of loveliness. Love withers under constraint: its very essence is liberty: it is compatible neither with obedience, jealousy, nor fear: it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited, where its votaries live in confidence, equality, and unreserve.

How long then ought the sexual connexion to last? what law ought to specify the extent of the grievances

which should limit its duration? A husband and wife ought to continue so long united as they love each other: any law which should bind them to cohabitation for one moment after the decay of their affection, would be a most intolerable tyranny, and the most unworthy of toleration. How odious an usurpation of the right of private judgment should that law be considered, which should make the ties of friendship indissoluble, in spite of the caprices, the inconstancy, the fallibility, and capacity for improvement of the human mind. And by so much would the fetters of love be heavier and more unendurable than those of friendship, as love is more vehement and capricious, more dependent on those delicate peculiarities of imagination, and less capable of reduction to the ostensible merits of the object.

The state of society in which we exist is a mixture of feudal savageness and imperfect civilization. The narrow and unenlightened morality of the Christian religion is an aggravation of these evils. It is not even until lately that mankind have admitted that happiness is the sole end of the science of ethics, as of all other sciences; and that the fanatical idea of mortifying the flesh for the love of God has been discarded. I have heard, indeed, an ignorant collegian adduce, in favour of Christianity, its hostility to every worldly feeling!*

But if happiness be the object of morality, of all human unions and disunions; if the worthiness of every action

* The first Christian Emperor made a law by which seduction was punished with death; if the female pleaded her own consent, she also was punished with death; if the parents endeavoured to screen the criminals, they were banished and their estates were confiscated; the slaves who might be accessary were burned alive, or forced to swallow melted lead. The very offspring of an illegal love were involved in the consequences of the sentence.— *Gibbon's Decline and Fall*, &c., vol. ii., page 210. See also, for the hatred of the primitive Christians to love and even marriage, page 269.

is to be estimated by the quantity of pleasurable sensation it is calculated to produce, then the connexion of the sexes is so long sacred as it contributes to the comfort of the parties, and is naturally dissolved when its evils are greater than its benefits. There is nothing immoral in this separation. Constancy has nothing virtuous in itself, independently of the pleasure it confers; and partakes of the temporizing spirit of vice in proportion as it endures tamely moral defects of magnitude in the object of its indiscreet choice. Love is free: to promise for ever to love the same woman is not less absurd than to promise to believe the same creed: such a vow, in both cases, excludes us from all inquiry. The language of the votarist is this: The woman I now love may be infinitely inferior to many others; the creed I now profess may be a mass of errors and absurdities; but I exclude myself from all future information as to the amiability of the one, and the truth of the other, resolving blindly, and in spite of conviction, to adhere to them.—Is this the language of delicacy and reason? Is the love of such a frigid heart of more worth than its belief?

The present system of constraint does no more, in the majority of instances, than make hypocrites or open enemies. Persons of delicacy and virtue, unhappily united to one whom they find it impossible to love, spend the loveliest season of their life in unproductive efforts to appear otherwise than they are, for the sake of the feelings of their partner or the welfare of their mutual offspring: those of less generosity and refinement openly avow their disappointment, and linger out the remnant of that union, which only death can dissolve, in a state of incurable bickering and hostility. The early education of their children takes its colour from the squabbles of the parents; they are nursed in a systematic school of ill-humour, violence, and falsehood. Had they been suffered to part at the moment when indifference rendered their

union irksome, they would have been spared many years of misery: they would have connected themselves more suitably, and would have found that happiness in the society of more congenial partners which is for ever denied them by the despotism of marriage. They would have been, separately, useful and happy members of society, who, whilst united, were miserable, and rendered misanthropical by misery. The conviction that wedlock is indissoluble holds out the strongest of all temptations to the perverse: they indulge without restraint in acrimony, and all the little tyrannies of domestic life, when they know that their victim is without appeal. If this connexion were put on a rational basis, each would be assured that habitual ill-temper would terminate in separation, and would check this vicious and dangerous propensity.

Prostitution is the legitimate offspring of marriage and its accompanying errors. Women, for no other crime than having followed the dictates of a natural appetite, are driven with fury from the comforts and sympathies of society. It is less venial than murder; and the punishment which is inflicted on her who destroys her child to escape reproach, is lighter than the life of agony and disease to which the prostitute is irrecoverably doomed. Has a woman obeyed the impulse of unerring nature;—society declares war against her, pitiless and eternal war: she must be the tame slave, she must make no reprisals; theirs is the right of persecution, hers the duty of endurance. She lives a life of infamy: the loud and bitter laugh of scorn scares her from all return. She dies of long and lingering disease: yet *she* is in fault, *she* is the criminal, *she* the froward and untameable child,—and society, forsooth, the pure and virtuous matron, who casts her as an abortion from her undefiled bosom! Society avenges herself on the criminals of her own creation; she is employed in anathematizing the vice to-day, which yesterday she was the most zealous to

teach. Thus is formed one-tenth of the population of London. Meanwhile the evil is twofold: young men, excluded by the fanatical idea of chastity from the society of modest and accomplished women, associate with these vicious and miserable beings, destroying thereby all those exquisite and delicate sensibilities whose existence cold-hearted wordlings have denied; annihilating all genuine passion, and debasing that to a selfish feeling which is the excess of generosity and devotedness. Their body and mind alike crumble into a hideous wreck of humanity; idiotcy and disease become perpetuated in their miserable offspring, and distant generations suffer for the bigoted morality of their forefathers. Chastity is a monkish and evangelical superstition, a greater foe to natural temperance even than unintellectual sensuality; it strikes at the root of all domestic happiness, and consigns more than half of the human race to misery, that some few may monopolize according to law. A system could not well have been devised more studiously hostile to human happiness than marriage.

I conceive that, from the abolition of marriage, the fit and natural arrangement of sexual connexion would result. I by no means assert that the intercourse would be promiscuous: on the contrary; it appears, from the relation of parent to child, that this union is generally of long duration, and marked above all others with generosity and self-devotion. But this is a subject which it is perhaps premature to discuss. That which will result from the abolition of marriage, will be natural and right; because choice and change will be exempted from restraint.

In fact, religion and morality, as they now stand, compose a practical code of misery and servitude: the genius of human happiness must tear every leaf from the accursed book of God, ere man can read the inscription on his heart. How would morality, dressed up in stiff

stays and finery, start from her own disgusting image, should she look in the mirror of nature!

Page 125.

To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there.

The north polar star, to which the axis of the earth, in its present state of obliquity, points. It is exceedingly probable, from many considerations, that this obliquity will gradually diminish, until the equator coincides with the ecliptic: the nights and days will then become equal on the earth throughout the year, and probably the seasons also. There is no great extravagance in presuming that the progress of the perpendicularity of the poles may be as rapid as the progress of intellect; or that there should be a perfect identity between the moral and physical improvement of the human species. It is certain that wisdom is not compatible with disease, and that, in the present state of the climates of the earth, health, in the true and comprehensive sense of the word, is out of the reach of civilized man. Astronomy teaches us that the earth is now in its progress, and that the poles are every year becoming more and more perpendicular to the ecliptic. The strong evidence afforded by the history of mythology, and geological researches, that some event of this nature has taken place already, affords a strong presumption that this progress is not merely an oscillation, as has been surmised by some late astronomers.* Bones of animals peculiar to the torrid zone have been found in the north of Siberia, and on the banks of the river Ohio. Plants have been found in the fossil state in the interior of Germany, which demand the present climate of Hindostan for their production.† The researches of M.

* Laplace, Systême du Monde.

† Cabanis, Rapports du Physique et du Moral de l'Homme, vol. ii. p. 406.

Bailly * establish the existence of a people who inhabited a tract in Tartary, 49° north latitude, of greater antiquity than either the Indians, the Chinese, or the Chaldeans, from whom these nations derived their sciences and theology. We find, from the testimony of ancient writers, that Britain, Germany, and France, were much colder than at present, and that their great rivers were annually frozen over. Astronomy teaches us also, that since this period the obliquity of the earth's position has been considerably diminished.

Page 128.

No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.

Deux exemples serviront à nous rendre plus sensible le principe qui vient d'être posé ; nous emprunterons l'une du physique et l'autre du moral. Dans un tourbillon de poussière qu'éleve un vent impetueux, quelque confus qu'il paroisse à nos yeux ; dans la plus affreuse tempête excité par des vents opposés qui soulèvent les flots, il n'y a pas une seule molécule de poussière ou d'eau qui soit placé au *hazard*, qui n'ait sa cause suffisante pour occuper le lieu où elle se trouve, et qui n'agisse rigoureusement de la manière dont elle doit agir. Une géomètre qui connoîtroit exactement les différentes forces qui agissent dans ces deux cas, et les propriétés des molécules qui sont mues, demontreroit que d'après des causes donnés, chaque molécule agit précisément comme elle doit agir, et ne peut agir autrement qu'elle ne fait.

Dans les convulsions terribles qui agitent quelquefois les sociétés politiques, et qui produisent souvent le ren-

* Lettres sur les Sciences, à Voltaire. Bailly.

versement d'un empire, il n'y a pas une seule action, une seule parole, une seule pensée, une seule volonté, une seule passion dans les agens qui concourent à la révolution comme destructeurs ou comme victimes, qui ne soit nécessaire, qui n'agisse comme elle doit agir, qui n'opère infailliblement les effets qu'elle doit opérer, suivant la place qu'occupent ces agens dans ce tourbillon moral. Cela paroîtroit évident pour une intelligence qui sera en état de saisir et d'apprécier toutes les actions et reactions des esprits et des corps de ceux qui contribuent à cette révolution.—*Système de la Nature*, vol i. p. 44.

Page 129.

Necessity! thou mother of the world!

He who asserts the doctrine of Necessity, means that, contemplating the events which compose the moral and material universe, he beholds only an immense and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects, no one of which could occupy any other place than it does occupy, or act in any other place than it does act. The idea of necessity is obtained by our experience of the connexion between objects, the uniformity of the operations of nature, the constant conjunction of similar events, and the consequent inference of one from the other. Mankind are therefore agreed in the admission of necessity, if they admit that these two circumstances take place in voluntary action. Motive is, to voluntary action in the human mind, what cause is to effect in the material universe. The word liberty, as applied to mind, is analogous to the word chance, as applied to matter: they spring from an ignorance of the certainty of the conjunction of antecedents and consequents.

Every human being is irresistibly impelled to act precisely as he does act: in the eternity which preceded his birth, a chain of causes was generated, which, operating

under the name of motives, make it impossible that any thought of his mind, or any action of his life, should be otherwise than it is. Were the doctrine of Necessity false, the human mind would no longer be a legitimate object of science; from like causes it would be in vain that we should expect like effects; the strongest motive would no longer be paramount over the conduct; all knowledge would be vague and undeterminate; we could not predict with any certainty, that we might not meet as an enemy to-morrow, him with whom we have parted in friendship to-night; the most probable inducements and the clearest reasonings would lose the invariable influence they possess. The contrary of this is demonstrably the fact. Similar circumstances produce the same unvariable effects. The precise character and motives of any man on any occasion being given, the moral philosopher could predict his actions with as much certainty as the natural philosopher could predict the effects of the mixture of any particular chemical substances. Why is the aged husbandman more experienced than the young beginner? Because there is an uniform, undeniable necessity in the operations of the material universe. Why is the old statesman more skilful than the raw politician? Because, relying on the necessary conjunction of motive and action, he proceeds to produce moral effects, by the application of those moral causes which experience has shown to be effectual. Some actions may be found to which we can attach no motives, but these are the effects of causes with which we are unacquainted. Hence the relation which motive bears to voluntary action is that of cause to effect; nor, placed in this point of view, is it, or ever has it been the subject of popular or philosophical dispute. None but the few fanatics who are engaged in the herculean task of reconciling the justice of their God with the misery of man, will longer outrage common sense by the supposition of an event without a cause, a voluntary

action without a motive. History, politics, morals, criticism, all grounds of reasoning, all principles of science, alike assume the truth of the doctrine of Necessity. No farmer carrying his corn to market doubts the sale of it at the market price. The master of a manufactory no more doubts that he can purchase the human labour necessary for his purposes, than that his machinery will act as they have been accustomed to act.

But, whilst none have scrupled to admit necessity as influencing matter, many have disputed its dominion over mind. Independently of its militating with the received ideas of the justice of God, it is by no means obvious to a superficial inquiry. When the mind observes its own operations, it feels no connexion of motive and action: but as we know "nothing more of causation than the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other, as we find that these two circumstances are universally allowed to have place in voluntary action, we may be easily led to own that they are subjected to the necessity common to all causes." The actions of the will have a regular conjunction with circumstances and characters; motive is, to voluntary action, what cause is to effect. But the only idea we can form of causation is a constant conjunction of similar objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other: wherever this is the case, necessity is clearly established.

The idea of liberty, applied metaphorically to the will, has sprung from a misconception of the meaning of the word power. What is power?—*id quod potest*, that which can produce any given effect. To deny power, is to say that nothing can or has the power to be or act. In the only true sense of the word power, it applies with equal force to the loadstone as to the human will. Do you think these motives, which I shall present, are powerful enough to rouse him? is a question just as

common as, Do you think this lever has the power of raising this weight? The advocates of free-will assert that the will has the power of refusing to be determined by the strongest motive: but the strongest motive is that which, overcoming all others, ultimately prevails; this assertion therefore amounts to a denial of the will being ultimately determined by that motive which does determine it, which is absurd. But it is equally certain that a man cannot resist the strongest motive, as that he cannot overcome a physical impossibility.

The doctrine of Necessity tends to introduce a great change into the established notions of morality, and utterly to destroy religion. Reward and punishment must be considered, by the Necessarian, merely as motives which he would employ in order to procure the adoption or abandonment of any given line of conduct. Desert, in the present sense of the word, would no longer have any meaning; and he, who should inflict pain upon another for no better reason than that he deserved it, would only gratify his revenge under pretence of satisfying justice. It is not enough, says the advocate of free-will, that a criminal should be prevented from a repetition of his crime: he should feel pain, and his torments, when justly inflicted, ought precisely to be proportioned to his fault. But utility is morality; that which is incapable of producing happiness is useless; and though the crime of Damiens must be condemned, yet the frightful torments which revenge, under the name of justice, inflicted on this unhappy man, cannot be supposed to have augmented, even at the long run, the stock of pleasurable sensation in the world. At the same time the doctrine of Necessity does not in the least diminish our disapprobation of vice. The conviction which all feel, that a viper is a poisonous animal, and that a tiger is constrained, by the inevitable condition of his existence, to devour men, does not induce

us to avoid them less sedulously, or, even more, to hesitate in destroying them: but he would surely be of a hard heart, who, meeting with a serpent on a desert island, or in a situation where it was incapable of injury, should wantonly deprive it of existence. A Necessarian is inconsequent to his own principles, if he indulges in hatred or contempt; the compassion which he feels for the criminal is unmixed with a desire of injuring him: he looks with an elevated and dreadless composure upon the links of the universal chain as they pass before his eyes; whilst cowardice, curiosity, and inconsistency, only assail him in proportion to the feebleness and indistinctness with which he has perceived and rejected the delusions of free-will.

Religion is the perception of the relation in which we stand to the principle of the universe. But if the principle of the universe be not an organic being, the model and prototype of man, the relation between it and human beings is absolutely none. Without some insight into its will respecting our actions, religion is nugatory and vain. But will is only a mode of animal mind; moral qualities also are such as only a human being can possess; to attribute them to the principle of the universe, is to annex to it properties incompatible with any possible definition of its nature. It is probable that the word God was originally only an expression denoting the unknown cause of the known events which men perceived in the universe. By the vulgar mistake of a metaphor for a real being, of a word for a thing, it became a man, endowed with human qualities and governing the universe as an earthly monarch governs his kingdom. Their addresses to this imaginary being, indeed, are much in the same style as those of subjects to a king. They acknowledge his benevolence, deprecate his anger, and supplicate his favour.

But the doctrine of Necessity teaches us, that in no

case could any event have happened otherwise than it did happen, and that, if God is the author of good, he is also the author of evil; that, if he is entitled to our gratitude for the one, he is entitled to our hatred for the other; that, admitting the existence of this hypothetic being, he is also subjected to the dominion of an immutable necessity. It is plain that the same arguments which prove that God is the author of food, light, and life, prove him also to be the author of poison, darkness, and death. The wide-wasting earthquake, the storm, the battle, and the tyranny, are attributable to this hypothetic being in the same degree as the fairest forms of nature, sunshine, liberty, and peace.

But we are taught, by the doctrine of Necessity, that there is neither good nor evil in the universe, otherwise than as the events to which we apply these epithets have relation to our own peculiar mode of being. Still less than with the hypothesis of a God, will the doctrine of Necessity accord with the belief of a future state of punishment. God made man such as he is, and then damned him for being so: for to say that God was the author of all good, and man the author of all evil, is to say that one man made a straight line and a crooked one, and another man made the incongruity.

A Mahometan story, much to the present purpose, is recorded, wherein Adam and Moses are introduced disputing before God in the following manner. Thou, says Moses, art Adam, whom God created, and animated with the breath of life, and caused to be worshipped by the angels, and placed in Paradise, from whence mankind have been expelled for thy fault. Whereto Adam answered, Thou art Moses, whom God chose for his apostle, and entrusted with his word, by giving thee the tables of the law, and whom he vouchsafed to admit to discourse

with himself. How many years dost thou find the law was written before I was created? Says Moses, Forty. And dost thou not find, replied Adam, these words therein, And Adam rebelled against his Lord and transgressed? Which Moses confessing, Dost thou therefore blame me, continued he, for doing that which God wrote of me that I should do, forty years before I was created, nay, for what was decreed concerning me fifty thousand years before the creation of heaven and earth?—*Sale's Prelim. Disc. to the Koran*, p. 164.

Page 131.

There is no God!

This negation must be understood solely to affect a creative Deity. The hypothesis of a pervading Spirit coeternal with the universe, remains unshaken.

A close examination of the validity of the proofs adduced to support any proposition, is the only secure way of attaining truth, on the advantages of which it is unnecessary to descant: our knowledge of the existence of a Deity is a subject of such importance, that it cannot be too minutely investigated; in consequence of this conviction we proceed briefly and impartially to examine the proofs which have been adduced. It is necessary first to consider the nature of belief.

When a proposition is offered to the mind, it perceives the agreement or disagreement of the ideas of which it is composed. A perception of their agreement is termed *belief*. Many obstacles frequently prevent this perception from being immediate; these the mind attempts to remove, in order that the perception may be distinct. The

mind is active in the investigation, in order to perfect the state of perception of the relation which the component ideas of the proposition bear to each, which is passive: the investigation being confused with the perception, has induced many falsely to imagine that the mind is active in belief,—that belief is an act of volition, in consequence of which it may be regulated by the mind. Pursuing, continuing this mistake, they have attached a degree of criminality to disbelief, of which in its nature it is incapable: it is equally incapable of merit.

Belief, then, is a passion, the strength of which, like every other passion, is in precise proportion to the degrees of excitement.

The degrees of excitement are three.

The senses are the sources of all knowledge to the mind; consequently their evidence claims the strongest assent.

The decision of the mind, founded upon our own experience, derived from these sources, claims the next degree.

The experience of others, which addresses itself to the former one, occupies the lowest degree.

(A graduated scale, on which should be marked the capabilities of propositions to approach to the test of the senses, would be a just barometer of the belief which ought to be attached to them.)

Consequently no testimony can be admitted which is contrary to reason; reason is founded on the evidence of our senses.

Every proof may be referred to one of these three divisions: it is to be considered what arguments we receive from each of them, which should convince us of the existence of a Deity.

1st. The evidence of the senses. If the Deity should appear to us, if he should convince our senses of his

existence, this revelation would necessarily command belief. Those to whom the Deity has thus appeared have the strongest possible conviction of his existence. But the God of Theologians is incapable of local visibility.

2nd. Reason. It is urged that man knows that whatever is, must either have had a beginning, or have existed from all eternity: he also knows, that whatever is not eternal must have had a cause. When this reasoning is applied to the universe, it is necessary to prove that it was created: until that is clearly demonstrated, we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. We must prove design before we can infer a designer. The only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other. In a case where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is least incomprehensible;—it is easier to suppose that the universe has existed from all eternity, than to conceive a being beyond its limits capable of creating it: if the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

The other argument, which is founded on a man's knowledge of his own existence, stands thus. A man knows not only that he now is, but that once he was not; consequently there must have been a cause. But our idea of causation is alone derivable from the constant conjunction of objects and the consequent inference of one from the other; and, reasoning experimentally, we can only infer from effects, causes exactly adequate to those effects. But there certainly is a generative power which is effected by certain instruments: we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments; nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration: we admit that the generative power is incomprehensible:

but to suppose that the same effect is produced by an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent being, leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

3rd. Testimony. It is required that testimony should not be contrary to reason. The testimony that the Deity convinces the senses of men of his existence, can only be admitted by us, if our mind considers it less probable that these men should have been deceived, than that the Deity should have appeared to them. Our reason can never admit the testimony of men, who not only declare that they were eye-witnesses of miracles, but that the Deity was irrational; for he commanded that he should be believed, he proposed the highest rewards for faith, eternal punishments for disbelief. We can only command voluntary actions; belief is not an act of volition; the mind is even passive, or involuntarily active: from this it is evident that we have no sufficient testimony, or rather that testimony is insufficient to prove the being of a God. It has been before shown that it cannot be deduced from reason. They alone, then, who have been convinced by the evidence of the senses, can believe it.

Hence it is evident that, having no proofs from either of the three sources of conviction, the mind *cannot* believe the existence of a creative God: it is also evident, that, as belief is a passion of the mind, no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief; and that they only are reprehensible who neglect to remove the false medium through which their mind views any subject of discussion. Every reflecting mind must acknowledge that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity.

God is an hypothesis, and, as such, stands in need of proof: the *onus probandi* rests on the theist. Sir Isaac Newton says: *Hypotheses non fingo, quicquid enim ex phænomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est, et*

hypothesis vel metaphysicæ, vel physicæ, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ, in philosophiâ locum non habent. To all proofs of the existence of a creative God apply this valuable rule. We see a variety of bodies possessing a variety of powers: we merely know their effects; we are in a state of ignorance with respect to their essences and causes. These Newton calls the phenomena of things; but the pride of philosophy is unwilling to admit its ignorance of their causes. From the phenomena, which are the objects of our senses, we attempt to infer a cause, which we call God, and gratuitously endow it with all negative and contradictory qualities. From this hypothesis we invent this general name, to conceal our ignorance of causes and essences. The being called God by no means answers with the conditions prescribed by Newton; it bears every mark of a veil woven by philosophical conceit, to hide the ignorance of philosophers even from themselves. They borrow the threads of its texture from the anthropomorphism of the vulgar. Words have been used by sophists for the same purposes, from the occult qualities of the peripatetics to the *effluvium* of Boyle and the *crinities* or *nebulæ* of Herschel. God is represented as infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; he is contained under every prædicate in non that the logic of ignorance could fabricate. Even his worshippers allow that it is impossible to form any idea of him: they exclaim with the French poet,

Pour dire ce qu'il est, il faut être lui-même.

Bacon says, that "atheism leaves to man reason, philosophy, natural piety, laws, reputation, and everything that can serve to conduct him to virtue; but superstition destroys all these, and erects itself into a tyranny over the understandings of men: hence atheism never disturbs the government, but renders man more clear-

sighted, since he sees nothing beyond the boundaries of the present life."—*Bacon's Moral Essays.*

La première théologie de l'homme lui fit d'abord craindre et adorer les élémens même, des objets matériels et grossiers ; il rendit ensuite ses hommages à des agens présidens aux élémens, à des génies inférieurs, à des héros, ou à des hommes doués de grands qualités. A force de réfléchir il crut simplifier les choses en soumettant la nature entière à un seul agent, à un esprit, à une âme universelle, qui mettoit cette nature et ses parties en mouvement. En remontant des causes en causes, les mortels ont fini par ne rien voir ; et c'est dans cette obscurité qu'ils ont placé leur Dieu ; c'est dans cette abîme ténébreux que leur imagination inquiète travaille toujours à se fabriquer des chimères, qui les affligeront jusqu'à ce que la connoissance de la nature les détrompe des fantômes qu'ils ont toujours si vainement adorés.

Si nous voulons nous rendre compte de nos idées sur la Divinité, nous serons obligés de convenir que, par le mot *Dieu*, les hommes n'ont jamais pu désigner que la cause la plus cachée, la plus éloignée, la plus inconnue des effets qu'ils voyoient : ils ne font usage de ce mot, que lorsque le jeu des causes naturelles et connues cesse d'être visible pour eux ; dès qu'ils perdent le fil de ces causes, ou dès que leur esprit ne peut plus en suivre la chaîne, ils tranchent leur difficulté, et terminent leur recherches en appellant Dieu la dernière des causes, c'est-à-dire celle qui est au-delà de toutes les causes qu'ils connoissent ; ainsi ils ne font qu'assigner une dénomination vague à une cause ignorée, à laquelle leur paresse ou les bornes de leurs connoissances les forcent de s'arrêter. Toutes les fois qu'on nous dit que Dieu est l'auteur de quelque phénomène, cela signifie qu'on ignore comment un tel phénomène a pu s'opérer par le sécours des forces ou des causes que nous connoissons dans la nature. C'est

ainsi que le commun des hommes, dont l'ignorance est le partage, attribue à la Divinité non seulement les effets inusités qui les frappent, mais encore les événemens les plus simples, dont les causes sont les plus faciles à connoître pour quiconque a pu les méditer. En un mot, l'homme a toujours respecté les causes inconnues des effets surprenans, que son ignorance l'empêchoit de démêler. Ce fut sur les débris de la nature que les hommes élevèrent le colosse imaginaire de la Divinité.

Si l'ignorance de la nature donna la naissance aux dieux, la connoissance de la nature est faite pour les detruire. A mésure que l'homme s'instruit, ses forces et ses ressources augmentent avec ses lumières; les sciences, les arts conservateurs, l'industrie, lui fournissent des secours; l'expérience le rassûre, ou lui procure des moyens de résister aux efforts de bien des causes qui cessent de l'alarmer dès qu'il les a connues. En un mot, ses terreurs se dissipent dans la même proportion que son esprit s'éclaire. L'homme instruit cesse d'être superstitieux.

Ce n'est jamais que sur parole que des peuples entiers adorent le Dieu de leurs pères et de leurs prêtres: l'autorité, la confiance, la soumission, et l'habitude leur tiennent lieu de conviction et de preuves; ils se prosternent et prient, parce que leurs pères leur ont appris à se prosterner et à prier: mais pourquoi ceux-ci se sont-ils mis à genoux? C'est que dans les temps éloignés leurs legislateurs et leurs guides leur en ont fait un devoir. "Adorez et croyez," ont-ils dit, "des dieux que vous ne pouvez comprendre; rapportez-vous en à notre sagesse profonde; nous en savons plus que vous sur la divinité." "Mais pourquoi m'en rapporterai-je à vous?" "C'est que Dieu le veut ainsi; c'est que Dieu vous punira si vous osez résister:" "Mais ce Dieu n'est-il donc pas la chose en question?" Cependant les hommes se sont toujours payés de ce cercle vicieux; la paresse de leur esprit leur fit trouver

plus court de s'en rapporter au jugement des autres. Toutes les notions religieuses sont fondées uniquement sur l'autorité; toutes les religions du monde défendent l'examen et ne veulent pas que l'on raisonne; c'est l'autorité qui veut qu'on croie en Dieu; ce Dieu n'est lui-même fondé que sur l'autorité de quelques hommes qui prétendent le connoître, et venir de sa part pour l'annoncer à la terre. Un Dieu fait par les hommes a sans doute besoin des hommes pour se faire connoître au monde.

Ne seroit-ce donc que pour des prêtres, des inspirés, des métaphysiciens que seroit reservée la conviction de l'existence d'un Dieu, que l'on dit néanmoins si necessaire à tout le genre humain? Mais trouvons-nous de l'harmonie entre les opinions théologiques des différens inspirés, ou des penseurs répandus sur la terre? Ceux même qui font profession d'adorer le même Dieu, sont-ils d'accord sur son compte? sont-ils contents des preuves que leurs collègues apportent de son existence? Souscrivent-ils unanimement aux idées qu'ils présentent sur sa nature, sur sa conduite, sur la façon d'entendre ses prétendus oracles? Est-il une contrée sur la terre où la science de Dieu se soit réellement perfectionnée? A-t-elle pris quelque part la consistance et l'uniformité que nous voyons prendre aux connoissances humaines, aux arts les plus futiles, aux métiers les plus meprisés? les mots d'*esprit*, d'*immatérialité*, de *création*, de *prédestination*, de *grace*; cette foule de distinctions subtiles dont la théologie s'est partout remplie; dans quelques pays, ces inventions si ingénieuses, imaginées par des penseurs qui se sont succédés depuis tant de siècles, n'ont fait, helas! qu'embrouiller les choses, et jamais la science la plus nécessaire aux hommes n'a jusqu' ici pu acquérir la moindre fixité. Depuis des milliers d'années des rêveurs oisifs se sont perpétuellement relayés pour méditer la Divinité, pour deviner ses voies cachées, pour inventer des hypothèses

propres à développer cette énigme importante. Leur peu de succès n'a point découragé la vanité théologique ; toujours on a parlé de Dieu : on s'est disputé, l'on s'est égorgé pour lui, et cet être sublime demeure toujours le plus ignoré et le plus discuté.

Les hommes auroient été trop heureux, si se bornant aux objets visibles qui les intéressent, ils eussent employé à perfectionner leurs sciences réelles, leurs lois, leur morale, leur éducation, la moitié des efforts qu'ils ont mis dans leurs recherches sur la Divinité. Ils auroient été bien plus sages encore, et plus fortunés, s'ils eussent pu consentir à laisser leurs guides désœuvrés se quereller entre eux, et sonder des profondeurs capables de les étourdir, sans se mêler de leurs disputes insensées. Mais il est de l'essence de l'ignorance d'attacher de l'importance à ce qu'elle ne comprend pas. La vanité humaine fait que l'esprit se roidit contre les difficultés. Plus un objet se dérobe à nos yeux, plus nous faisons d'efforts pour le saisir, parce que dès-lors il aiguillone notre orgueil, il irrite notre curiosité, il nous paroît intéressant. En combattant pour son Dieu, chacun ne combattit en effet que pour les intérêts de sa propre vanité, qui de toutes les passions humaines est la plus prompte à s'alarmer, et la plus propre à produire de très grandes folies.

Si, écartant pour un moment les idées fâcheuses que la théologie nous donne d'un Dieu capricieux, dont les décrets partiaux et despotiques décident du sort des humains, nous ne voulons fixer nos yeux que sur la bonté prétendue, que tous les hommes, même en tremblant devant ce Dieu, s'accordent à lui donner ; si nous lui supposons le projet qu'on lui prête, de n'avoir travaillé que pour sa propre gloire, d'exiger les hommages des êtres intelligens ; de ne chercher dans ses œuvres que le bien-être du genre humain ; comment concilier ces vues et ces dispositions avec l'ignorance vraiment invincible dans laquelle ce Dieu, si glorieux et si bon, laisse la

plupart des hommes sur son compte? Si Dieu veut être connu, chéri, remercié, que ne se montre-t-il sous des traits favorables à tous ces êtres intelligens dont il veut être aimé et adoré? Pourquoi ne point se manifester à toute la terre d'une façon non équivoque, bien plus capable de nous convaincre, que ces révélations particulières qui semblent accuser la Divinité d'une partialité fâcheuse pour quelques-unes de ses créatures? Le tout-puissant n'auroit-il pas donc des moyens plus convaincans de se montrer aux hommes, que ces métamorphoses ridicules, ces incarnations prétendues, qui nous sont attestées par des écrivains si peu d'accord entre eux dans les récits qu'ils en font? Au lieu de tant de miracles, inventés pour prouver la mission divine de tant de législateurs, révérés par les différens peuples du monde, le souverain des esprits ne pouvoit-il pas convaincre tout d'un coup l'esprit humain des choses qu'il vouloit lui faire connoître? Au lieu de suspendre un soleil dans la voûte du firmament; au lieu de répandre sans ordre les étoiles, et les constellations qui remplissent l'espace, n'eut-il pas été plus conforme aux vues d'un Dieu si jaloux de sa gloire et si bien intentionné pour l'homme; d'écrire d'une façon non sujette à dispute, son nom, ses attributs, ses volontés permanentes, en caractères ineffaçables, et lisibles également pour tous les habitants de la terre? Personne alors n'auroit pu douter de l'existence d'un Dieu, de ses volontés claires, de ses intentions visibles. Sous les yeux de ce Dieu si sensible, personne n'auroit eu l'audace de violer ses ordonnances; nul mortel n'eût osé se mettre dans le cas d'attirer sa colère: enfin nul homme n'eût eu le front d'en imposer en son nom, ou d'interpréter ses volontés suivant ses propres fantaisies.

En effet, quand même on supposeroit l'existence du Dieu théologique, et la réalité des attributs si discordans qu'on lui donne, l'on ne peut en rien conclure, pour

autoriser la conduite ou les cultes qu'on prescrit de lui rendre. La théologie est vraiment *le tonneau des Danaïdes*. A force de qualités contradictoires et d'assertions hazardées, elle a, pour ainsi dire, tellement garroté son Dieu qu'elle l'a mis dans l'impossibilité d'agir. S'il est infiniment bon, quelle raison aurions-nous de le craindre? S'il est infiniment sage, de quoi nous inquiéter sur notre sort? S'il sait tout, pourquoi l'avertir de nos besoins, et le fatiguer de nos prières? S'il est partout, pourquoi lui élever des temples? S'il est le maître de tout, pourquoi lui faire des sacrifices et des offrandes? S'il est juste, comment croire qu'il punisse des créatures qu'il a remplies de foiblesses? Si la grace fait tout en elles, quelle raison auroit-il de les récompenser? S'il est tout-puissant, comment l'offenser, comment lui résister? S'il est raisonnable, comment se mettroit-il en colère contre des aveugles, à qui il a laissé la liberté de déraisonner? S'il est immuable, de quel droit prétendrions-nous faire changer ses décrets? S'il est inconcevable, pourquoi nous en occuper? S'IL A PARLÉ, POURQUOI L'UNIVERS N'EST-IL PAS CONVAINCU? Si la connoissance d'un Dieu est la plus nécessaire, pourquoi n'est-elle pas la plus évidente, et la plus claire.—*Système de la Nature, London*, 1781.

The enlightened and benevolent Pliny thus publicly professes himself an atheist:—Quapropter effigiem Dei, formamque quærere, imbecillitatis humanæ reor. Quisquis est Deus (si modo est alius) et quacunque in parte, totus est sensus, totus est visus, totus auditus, totus animæ, totus animi, totus sui. * * * * * Imperfectæ vero in homine naturæ præcipua solatia ne deum quidem posse omnia. Namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere, si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ pœnis: nec mortales æternitate donare, aut revocare defunctos; nec facere ut qui vixit non vixerit, qui honores gessit non gesserit, nullumque habere in præteritum jus, præterquam oblivionis, atque (ut facetis quoque

argumentis societas hæc cum deo copuletur) ut bis dena viginta non sint, et multa similiter efficere non posse.—Per quæ, declaratur haud dubie, naturæ potentiam id quoque esse, quod Deum vocamus. — *Plin. Nat. His. cap. de Deo.*

The consistent Newtonian is necessarily an atheist. See *Sir W. Drummond's Academical Questions*, chap. iii. —Sir W. seems to consider the atheism to which it leads as a sufficient presumption of the falsehood of the system of gravitation: but surely it is more consistent with the good faith of philosophy to admit a deduction from facts, than an hypothesis incapable of proof, although it might militate with the obstinate preconceptions of the mob. Had this author, instead of inveighing against the guilt and absurdity of atheism, demonstrated its falsehood, his conduct would have been more suited to the modesty of the sceptic and the toleration of the philosopher.

Omnia enim per Dei potentiam facta sunt: imo, quia natura potentia nulla est nisi ipsa Dei potentia, artem est nos catemus Dei potentiam non intelligere, quatemus causas naturales ignoramus; adeoque stulte ad eandem Dei potentiam recurritur, quando rei alicujus, causam naturalem, sive est, ipsam Dei potentiam ignoramus.—SPINOSA, *Tract. Theologico-Pol.* chap. i. p. 14.

Page 132.

Ahasuerus, rise!

Ahasuerus the Jew crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel. Near two thousand years have elapsed since he was first goaded by never-ending restlessness to rove the globe from pole to pole. When our Lord was wearied with the burthen of his ponderous cross, and wanted to rest before the door of Ahasuerus, the unfeeling wretch drove him away with brutality. The Saviour of mankind staggered, sinking under the heavy load, but uttered no complaint. An angel of death appeared before Ahasuerus, and exclaimed indignantly, "Barbarian! thou hast denied rest to the Son of Man: be it denied thee also, until he comes to judge the world."

A black demon, let loose from hell upon Ahasuerus, goads him now from country to country; he is denied the consolation which death affords, and precluded from the rest of the peaceful grave.

Ahasuerus crept forth from the dark cave of Mount Carmel—he shook the dust from his beard—and taking up one of the sculls heaped there, hurled it down the eminence: it rebounded from the earth in shivered atoms. This was my father! roared Ahasuerus. Seven more sculls rolled down from rock to rock; while the infuriate Jew, following them with ghastly looks, exclaimed—And these were my wives! He still continued to hurl down scull after scull, roaring in dreadful accents—And these, and these, and these were my children! They *could die*; but, I! reprobate wretch, alas! I cannot die! Dreadful beyond conception is the judgment that hangs over me. Jerusalem fell—I crushed the sucking babe, and precipitated myself into the destructive flames. I cursed the Romans—but, alas! alas! the restless curse held me by the hair,—and I could not die!

Rome the giantess fell—I placed myself before the falling statue—she fell, and did not crush me. Nations

sprung up and disappeared before me ;—but I remained and did not die. From cloud-encircled cliffs did I precipitate myself into the ocean; but the foaming billows cast me upon the shore, and the burning arrow of existence pierced my cold heart again. I leaped into Etna's flaming abyss, and roared with the giants for ten long months, polluting with my groans the Mount's sulphureous mouth—ah! ten long months. The volcano fermented, and in a fiery stream of lava cast me up. I lay torn by the torture-snakes of hell amid the glowing cinders, and yet continued to exist. A forest was on fire: I darted on wings of fury and despair into the crackling wood. Fire dropped upon me from the trees, but the flames only singed my limbs : alas! it could not consume them.—I now mixed with the butchers of mankind and plunged in the tempest of the raging battle. I roared defiance to the infuriate Gaul, defiance to the victorious German ; but arrows and spears rebounded in shivers from my body. The Saracen's flaming sword broke upon my scull : balls in vain hissed upon me : the lightnings of battle glared harmless around my loins : in vain did the elephant trample on me, in vain the iron hoof of the wrathful steed! The mine, big with destructive power, burst upon me, and hurled me high in the air —I fell on heaps of smoking limbs, but was only singed. The giant's steel club rebounded from my body ; the executioner's hand could not strangle me ; the tiger's tooth could not pierce me, nor would the hungry lion in the circus devour me. I cohabited with poisonous snakes, and pinched the red crest of the dragon. The serpent stung, but could not destroy me ;—the dragon tormented, but dared not to devour me. I now provoked the fury of tyrants : I said to Nero, Thou art a bloodhound! I said to Christiern, Thou art a bloodhound! I said to Muley Ismail, Thou art a bloodhound!—The tyrants invented cruel torments, but did not kill me.

———Ha! not to be able to die—not to be able to die—not to be permitted to rest after the toils of life—to be doomed to be imprisoned for ever in the clay-formed dungeon—to be for ever clogged with this worthless body, its load of diseases and infirmities—to be condemned to hold for millenniums that yawning monster Sameness, and Time, that hungry hyena, ever bearing children, and ever devouring again her offspring!—Ha! not to be permitted to die! Awful avenger in heaven, hast thou in thine armoury of wrath a punishment more dreadful? then let it thunder upon me; command a hurricane to sweep me down to the foot of Carmel, that I there may lie extended; may pant, and writhe, and die!

This fragment is the translation of part of some German work, whose title I have vainly endeavoured to discover. I picked it up, dirty and torn, some years ago, in Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

Page 134.

I will beget a son, and he shall bear
The sins of all the world.

A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days, and there planted a delightful garden, in which he placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden he planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both them and their posterity yet unborn to satisfy his justice by their eternal misery. That, four thousand years after these events (the human race in the meanwhile having gone unredeemed to perdition), God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judea (whose virginity was nevertheless

uninjured), and begat a Son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died, in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire, he bearing the burthen of his Father's displeasure by proxy. The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.

During many ages of misery and darkness, this story gained implicit belief; but at length men arose who suspected that it was a fable and imposture, and that Jesus Christ, so far from being a God, was only a man like themselves. But a numerous set of men, who derived and still derive immense emoluments from this opinion, in the shape of a popular belief, told the vulgar, that, if they did not believe in the Bible, they would be damned to all eternity; and burned, imprisoned, and poisoned all the unbiassed and unconnected enquirers who occasionally arose. They still oppress them, so far as the people, now become more enlightened, will allow.

The belief in all that the Bible contains is called Christianity. A Roman governor of Judea, at the instances of a priest-led mob, crucified a man called Jesus eighteen centuries ago. He was a man of pure life, who desired to rescue his countrymen from the tyranny of their barbarous and degrading superstitions. The common fate of all who desire to benefit mankind awaited him. The rabble, at the instigation of the priests, demanded his death, although his very judge made public acknowledgment of his innocence. Jesus was sacrificed to the honour of that God with whom he was afterwards confounded. It is of importance, therefore, to distinguish between the pretended character of this being as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and his real character as a man, who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical

demon, who announces himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst he stretches forth his blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity; the other stands in the foremost list of those true heroes, who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty, in the cause of suffering humanity.*

The vulgar, ever in extremes, became persuaded that the crucifixion of Jesus was a supernatural event. Testimonies of miracles, so frequent in unenlightened ages, were not wanting to prove that he was something divine. This belief, rolling through the lapse of ages, met with the reveries of Plato and the reasonings of Aristotle, and acquired force and extent, until the divinity of Jesus became a dogma, which to dispute was death, which to doubt was infamy.

Christianity is now the established religion: he who attempts to impugn it, must be contented to behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion; though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in his name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessor in the homage of the world.

The same means that have supported every other popular belief, have supported Christianity. War, imprisonment, assassination, and falsehood; deeds of unexampled and incomparable atrocity have made it what it is. The blood shed by the votaries of the God of mercy and peace, since the establishment of his religion, would probably suffice to drown all other sectaries now on the habitable globe. We derive from our ancestors a faith thus fostered and supported: we quarrel, persecute, and

* Since writing this note I have seen reason to suspect that Jesus was an ambitious man, who aspired to the throne of Judea

hate for its maintenance. Even under a government which, whilst it infringes the very right of thought and speech, boasts of permitting the liberty of the press, a man is pilloried and imprisoned because he is a deist, and no one raises his voice in the indignation of outraged humanity. But it is ever a proof that the falsehood of a proposition is felt by those who use coercion, not reasoning, to procure its admission ; and a dispassionate observer would feel himself more powerfully interested in favour of a man, who, depending on the truth of his opinions, simply stated his reasons for entertaining them, than in that of his aggressor, who, daringly avowing his unwillingness or incapacity to answer them by argument, proceeded to repress the energies and break the spirit of their promulgator by that torture and imprisonment whose infliction he could command.

Analogy seems to favour the opinion that, as, like other systems, Christianity has arisen and augmented, so like them it will decay and perish ; that, as violence, darkness, and deceit, not reasoning and persuasion, have procured its admission among mankind, so, when enthusiasm has subsided, and time, that infallible controverter of false opinions, has involved its pretended evidences in the darkness of antiquity, it will become obsolete ; that Milton's poem alone will give permanency to the remembrance of its absurdities ; and that men will laugh as heartily at grace, faith, redemption, and original sin, as they now do at the metamorphoses of Jupiter, the miracles of Romish saints, the efficacy of witchcraft, and the appearance of departed spirits.

Had the Christian religion commenced and continued by the mere force of reasoning and persuasion, the preceding analogy would be inadmissible. We should never speculate on the future obsoleteness of a system perfectly conformable to nature and reason : it would endure so long as they endured ; it would be a truth as indisputable

as the light of the sun, the criminality of murder, and other facts, whose evidence, depending on our organization and relative situations, must remain acknowledged as satisfactory, so long as man is man. It is an incontrovertible fact, the consideration of which ought to repress the hasty conclusions of credulity, or moderate its obstinacy in maintaining them, that, had the Jews not been a fanatical race of men, had even the resolution of Pontius Pilate been equal to his candour, the Christian religion never could have prevailed, it could not even have existed: on so feeble a thread hangs the most cherished opinion of a sixth of the human race! When will the vulgar learn humility? When will the pride of ignorance blush at having believed before it could comprehend?

Either the Christian religion is true, or it is false: if true, it comes from God, and its authenticity can admit of doubt and dispute no further than its omnipotent author is willing to allow. Either the power or the goodness of God is called in question, if he leaves those doctrines most essential to the well-being of man in doubt and dispute; the only ones which, since their promulgation, have been the subject of unceasing cavil, the cause of irreconcilable hatred. *If God has spoken, why is the universe not convinced?*

There is this passage in the Christian Scriptures: "Those who obey not God, and believe not the Gospel of his Son, shall be punished with everlasting destruction." This is the pivot upon which all religions turn: they all assume that it is in our power to believe or not to believe; whereas the mind can only believe that which it thinks true. A human being can only be supposed accountable for those actions which are influenced by his will. But belief is utterly distinct from and unconnected with volition: it is the apprehension of the agreement or disagreement of the ideas that compose any proposition. Belief is a passion, or involuntary operation of the

mind, and, like other passions, its intensity is precisely proportionate to the degrees of excitement. Volition is essential to merit or demerit. But the Christian religion attaches the highest possible degrees of merit and demerit to that which is worthy of neither, and which is totally unconnected with the peculiar faculty of the mind, whose presence is essential to their being.

Christianity was intended to reform the world: had an all-wise Being planned it, nothing is more improbable than that it should have failed: omniscience would infallibly have foreseen the inutility of a scheme which experience demonstrates, to this age, to have been utterly unsuccessful.

Christianity inculcates the necessity of supplicating the Deity. Prayer may be considered under two points of view;—as an endeavour to change the intentions of God, or as a formal testimony of our obedience. But the former case supposes that the caprices of a limited intelligence can occasionally instruct the Creator of the world how to regulate the universe; and the latter, a certain degree of servility analogous to the loyalty demanded by earthly tyrants. Obedience indeed is only the pitiful and cowardly egotism of him who thinks that he can do something better than reason.

Christianity, like all other religions, rests upon miracles, prophecies, and martyrdoms. No religion ever existed, which had not its prophets, its attested miracles, and, above all, crowds of devotees who would bear patiently the most horrible tortures to prove its authenticity. It should appear that in no case can a discriminating mind subscribe to the genuineness of a miracle. A miracle is an infraction of nature's law, by a supernatural cause; by a cause acting beyond that eternal circle within which all things are included. God breaks through the law of nature, that he may convince mankind of the truth of that revelation which, in spite of his precautions, has

been, since its introduction, the subject of unceasing schism and cavil.

Miracles resolve themselves into the following question :*—Whether it is more probable the laws of nature, hitherto so immutably harmonious, should have undergone violation, or that a man should have told a lie? Whether it is more probable that we are ignorant of the natural cause of an event, or that we know the supernatural one? That, in old times, when the powers of nature were less known than at present, a certain set of men were themselves deceived, or had some hidden motive for deceiving others; or that God begat a son, who, in his legislation, measuring merit by belief, evidenced himself to be totally ignorant of the powers of the human mind—of what is voluntary, and what is the contrary?

We have many instances of men telling lies;—none of an infraction of nature's laws, those laws of whose government alone we have any knowledge or experience. The records of all nations afford innumerable instances of men deceiving others either from vanity or interest, or themselves being deceived by the limitedness of their views and their ignorance of natural causes: but where is the accredited case of God having come upon earth, to give the lie to his own creations? There would be something truly wonderful in the appearance of a ghost; but the assertion of a child that he saw one as he passed through the churchyard, is universally admitted to be less miraculous.

But even supposing that a man should raise a dead body to life before our eyes, and on this fact rest his claim to being considered the son of God;—the Humane Society restores drowned persons, and because it makes no mystery of the method it employs, its members are not mistaken for the sons of God. All that we have a right to infer from our ignorance of the cause of any event is that

* See Hume's Essays, vol. ii. page 121.

we do not know it: had the Mexicans attended to this simple rule when they heard the cannon of the Spaniards, they would not have considered them as gods: the experiments of modern chemistry would have defied the wisest philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome to have accounted for them on natural principles. An author of strong common sense has observed, that "a miracle is no miracle at second-hand;" he might have added, that a miracle is no miracle in any case; for until we are acquainted with all natural causes, we have no reason to imagine others.

There remains to be considered another proof of Christianity—Prophecy. A book is written before a certain event, in which this event is foretold; how could the prophet have foreknown it without inspiration; how could he have been inspired without God? The greatest stress is laid on the prophecies of Moses and Hosea on the dispersion of the Jews, and that of Isaiah concerning the coming of the Messiah. The prophecy of Moses is a collection of every possible cursing and blessing; and it is so far from being marvellous that the one of dispersion should have been fulfilled, that it would have been more surprising if, out of all these, none should have taken effect. In Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii. ver. 64, where Moses explicitly foretells the dispersion, he states that they shall there serve gods of wood and stone: "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other, *and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even gods of wood and stone.*" The Jews are at this day remarkably tenacious of their religion. Moses also declares that they shall be subjected to these causes for disobedience to his ritual: "And it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all the commandments and statutes which I command you this day, that all these

curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee." Is this the real reason? The third, fourth, and fifth chapters of Hosea are a piece of immodest confession. The indelicate type might apply in a hundred senses to a hundred things. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is more explicit, yet it does not exceed in clearness the oracles of Delphos. The historical proof, that Moses, Isaiah, and Hosea did write when they are said to have written, is far from being clear and circumstantial.

But prophecy requires proof in its character as a miracle; we have no right to suppose that a man foreknew future events from God, until it is demonstrated that he neither could know them by his own exertions, nor that the writings which contain the prediction could possibly have been fabricated after the event pretended to be foretold. It is more probable that writings, pretending to divine inspiration, should have been fabricated after the fulfilment of their pretended prediction, than that they should have really been divinely inspired; when we consider that the latter supposition makes God at once the creator of the human mind and ignorant of its primary powers, particularly as we have numberless instances of false religions, and forged prophecies of things long past, and no accredited case of God having conversed with men directly or indirectly. It is also possible that the description of an event might have foregone its occurrence; but this is far from being a legitimate proof of a divine revelation, as many men, not pretending to the character of a prophet, have nevertheless, in this sense, prophesied.

Lord Chesterfield was never yet taken for a prophet, even by a bishop, yet he uttered this remarkable prediction: "The despotic government of France is screwed up to the highest pitch; a revolution is fast approaching; that revolution, I am convinced, will be radical and sanguinary." This appeared in the letters of the prophet

long before the accomplishment of this wonderful prediction. Now, have these particulars come to pass, or have they not? If they have, how could the Earl have foreknown them without inspiration? If we admit the truth of the Christian religion on testimony such as this, we must admit, on the same strength of evidence, that God has affixed the highest rewards to belief, and the eternal tortures of the never-dying worm to disbelief; both of which have been demonstrated to be involuntary.

The last proof of the Christian religion depends on the influence of the Holy Ghost. Theologians divide the influence of the Holy Ghost into its ordinary and extraordinary modes of operation. The latter is supposed to be that which inspired the Prophets and Apostles; and the former to be the grace of God, which summarily makes known the truth of his revelation to those whose mind is fitted for its reception by a submissive perusal of his word. Persons convinced in this manner, can do anything but account for their conviction, describe the time at which it happened, or the manner in which it came upon them. It is supposed to enter the mind by other channels than those of the senses, and therefore professes to be superior to reason founded on their experience.

Admitting, however, the usefulness or possibility of a divine revelation, unless we demolish the foundations of all human knowledge, it is requisite that our reason should previously demonstrate its genuineness; for, before we extinguish the steady ray of reason and common sense, it is fit that we should discover whether we cannot do without their assistance, whether or no there be any other which may suffice to guide us through the labyrinth of life:* for, if a man is to be inspired upon all occasions, if he is to be sure of a thing because he is sure, if the ordinary operations of the spirit are not to be considered

* See Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, book iv. chap. xix., on Enthusiasm.

very extraordinary modes of demonstration, if enthusiasm is to usurp the place of proof, and madness that of sanity, all reasoning is superfluous. The Mahometan dies fighting for his Prophet, the Indian immolates himself at the chariot-wheels of Brahma, the Hottentot worships an insect, the Negro a bunch of feathers, the Mexican sacrifices human victims! Their degree of conviction must certainly be very strong: it cannot arise from conviction, it must from feelings, the reward of their prayers. If each of these should affirm, in opposition to the strongest possible arguments, that inspiration carried internal evidence, I fear their inspired brethren, the orthodox Missionaries, would be so uncharitable as to pronounce them obstinate.

Miracles cannot be received as testimonies of a disputed fact, because all human testimony has ever been insufficient to establish the possibility of miracles. That which is incapable of proof itself, is no proof of anything else. Prophecy has also been rejected by the test of reason. Those, then, who have been actually inspired, are the only true believers in the Christian religion.

> Mox numine viso
> Virginei tumuere sinus, innuptaque mater
> Arcano stupuit compleri viscera partu,
> Auctorem paritura suum. Mortalia corda
> Artificem texere poli, latuitque sub uno
> Pectore, qui totum late complectitur orbem.
>
> CLAUDIAN, *Carmen Paschale.*

Does not so monstrous and disgusting an absurdity carry its own infamy and refutation with itself?

Page 145.

Him, (still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing,
Which, from the exhaustless lore of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind,) the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness, gift
With self-enshrined eternity, &c.

Time is our consciousness of the succession of ideas in our mind. Vivid sensation, of either pain or pleasure, makes the time seem long, as the common phrase is, because it renders us more acutely conscious of our ideas. If a mind be conscious of an hundred ideas during one minute, by the clock, and of two hundred during another, the latter of these spaces would actually occupy so much greater extent in the mind as two exceed one in quantity. If, therefore, the human mind, by any future improvement of its sensibility, should become conscious of an infinite number of ideas in a minute, that minute would be eternity. I do not hence infer that the actual space between the birth and death of a man will ever be prolonged ; but that his sensibility is perfectible, and that the number of ideas which his mind is capable of receiving is indefinite. One man is stretched on the rack during twelve hours ; another sleeps soundly in his bed : the difference of time perceived by these two persons is immense ; one hardly will believe that half an hour has elapsed, the other could credit that centuries had flown during his agony. Thus, the life of a man of virtue and talent, who should die in his thirtieth year, is, with regard to his own feelings, longer than that of a miserable priest-ridden slave, who dreams out a century of dulness. The one has perpetually cultivated his mental faculties, has rendered himself master of his thoughts, can abstract and generalize amid the lethargy of every-day business ;—the other can slumber over the brightest moments of his being, and is unable to remember the

happiest hour of his life. Perhaps the perishing ephemeron enjoys a longer life than the tortoise.

Dark flood of time!
Roll as it listeth thee—I measure not
By months or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on the brink
And watch the bubble whirl'd beyond his ken
That pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassion'd thought
Prolong my being: if I wake no more,
My life more actual living will contain
Than some grey veterans' of the world's cold school,
Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,
By one enthusiast feeling unredeem'd.

See Godwin's Pol. Jus. vol. i. *page* 411;—*and Condorcet, Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain, Epoque* ix.

Page 145.

No longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face.

I hold that the depravity of the physical and moral nature of man originated in his unnatural habits of life. The origin of man, like that of the universe of which he is a part, is enveloped in impenetrable mystery. His generations either had a beginning, or they had not. The weight of evidence in favour of each of these suppositions seems tolerably equal; and it is perfectly unimportant to the present argument which is assumed. The language spoken, however, by the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove, that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrified the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites. The date of this event seems to have also been that of some great change in the climates of the earth, with which it has an obvious correspondence. The allegory of Adam and Eve eating

of the tree of evil, and entailing upon their posterity the wrath of God and the loss of everlasting life, admits of no other explanation than the disease and crime that have flowed from unnatural diet. Milton was so well aware of this, that he makes Raphael thus exhibit to Adam the consequence of his disobedience:—

Immediately a place
Before his eyes appear'd: sad, noisome, dark:
A lazar-house it seem'd; wherein were laid
Numbers of all diseased: all maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds,
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,
Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
Dæmoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence,
Dropsies, and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

And how many thousands more might not be added to this frightful catalogue!

The story of Prometheus is one likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained. Prometheus stole fire from heaven, and was chained for this crime to mount Caucasus, where a vulture continually devoured his liver, that grew to meet its hunger. Hesiod says, that before the time of Prometheus, mankind were exempt from suffering; that they enjoyed a vigorous youth, and that death, when at length it came, approached like sleep, and gently closed their eyes. Again, so general was this opinion, that Horace, a poet of the Augustan age, writes—

Audax omnia perpeti,
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas;
Audax Iapeti genus
Ignem fraude mala gentibus intulit:

Post ignem ætheriâ domo
Subductum, macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors,
Semotique prius tarda necessitas
Lethi corripuit gradum.

How plain a language is spoken by all this. Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease. It consumed his being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety, inducing the soul-quelling sinkings of premature and violent death. All vice arose from the ruin of healthful innocence. Tyranny, superstition, commerce, and inequality, were then first known, when reason vainly attempted to guide the wanderings of exacerbated passion. I conclude this part of the subject with an extract from Mr. Newton's Defence of Vegetable Regimen, from whom I have borrowed this interpretation of the fable of Prometheus.

"Making allowance for such transposition of the events of the allegory as time might produce after the important truths were forgotten, which this portion of the ancient mythology was intended to transmit, the drift of the fable seems to be this:—Man at his creation was endowed with the gift of perpetual youth; that is, he was not formed to be a sickly suffering creature as we now see him, but to enjoy health, and to sink by slow degrees into the bosom of his parent earth without disease or pain. Prometheus first taught the use of animal food (primus bovem occidit Prometheus *) and of fire, with which to render it more digestible and pleasing to the taste. Jupiter, and the rest of the gods, foreseeing the conse-

* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. sect. 57.

quences of these inventions, were amused or irritated at the short-sighted devices of the newly-formed creature, and left him to experience the sad effects of them. Thirst, the necessary concomitant of a flesh diet" (perhaps of all diet vitiated by culinary preparation), "ensued; water was resorted to, and man forfeited the inestimable gift of health which he had received from heaven: he became diseased, the partaker of a precarious existence, and no longer descended slowly to his grave."*

> But just disease to luxury succeeds,
> And every death its own avenger breeds;
> The fury passions from that blood began,
> And turn'd on man a fiercer savage—man.

Man, and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased. The wild hog, the mouflon, the bison, and the wolf, are perfectly exempt from malady, and invariably die either from external violence, or natural old age. But the domestic hog, the sheep, the cow, and the dog, are subject to an incredible variety of distempers; and, like the corrupters of their nature, have physicians who thrive upon their miseries. The supereminence of man is like Satan's, a supereminence of pain; and the majority of his species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime, have reason to curse the untoward event that, by enabling him to communicate his sensations, raised him above the level of his fellow animals. But the steps that have been taken are irrevocable. The whole of human science is comprised in one question:—How can the advantages of intellect and civilization be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasures of natural life? How can we take the benefits, and reject the evils of the system, which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?—I believe that abstinence from animal food and spirituous liquors

* Return to Nature. Cadell, 1811.

would in a great measure capacitate us for the solution of this important question.

It is true, that mental and bodily derangement is attributable in part to other deviations from rectitude and nature than those which concern diet. The mistakes cherished by society respecting the connexion of the sexes, whence the misery and diseases of unsatisfied celibacy, unenjoying prostitution, and the premature arrival of puberty, necessarily spring; the putrid atmosphere of crowded cities; the exhalations of chemical processes; the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel; the absurd treatment of infants:—all these, and innumerable other causes, contribute their mite to the mass of human evil.

Comparative anatomy teaches us that man resembles frugivorous animals in everything, and carnivorous in nothing; he has neither claws wherewith to seize his prey, nor distinct and pointed teeth to tear the living fibre. A Mandarin of the first class, with nails two inches long, would probably find them alone inefficient to hold even a hare. After every subterfuge of gluttony, the bull must be degraded into the ox, and the ram into the wether, by an unnatural and inhuman operation, that the flaccid fibre may offer a fainter resistance to rebellious nature. It is only by softening and disguising dead flesh by culinary preparation, that it is rendered susceptible of mastication or digestion; and that the sight of its bloody juices and raw horror does not excite intolerable loathing and disgust. Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and, plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instincts of nature that would rise in judgment against it, and say,

Nature formed me for such work as this. Then, and then only, would he be consistent.

Man resembles no carnivorous animal. There is no exception, unless man be one, to the rule of herbivorous animals having cellulated colons.

The orang-outang perfectly resembles man both in the order and number of his teeth. The orang-outang is the most anthropomorphous of the ape tribe, all of which are strictly frugivorous. There is no other species of animals, which live on different food, in which this analogy exists.* In many frugivorous animals, the canine teeth are more pointed and distinct than those of man. The resemblance also of the human stomach to that of the orang-outang, is greater than to that of any other animal.

The intestines are also identical with those of herbivorous animals, which present a larger surface for absorption, and have ample and cellulated colons. The cœcum also, though short, is larger than that of carnivorous animals; and even here the orang-outang retains its accustomed similarity.

The structure of the human frame then is that of one fitted to a pure vegetable diet, in every essential particular. It is true, that the reluctance to abstain from animal food, in those who have been long accustomed to its stimulus, is so great in some persons of weak minds, as to be scarcely overcome; but this is far from bringing any argument in its favour. A lamb, which was fed for some time on flesh by a ship's crew, refused its natural diet at the end of the voyage. There are numerous instances of horses, sheep, oxen, and even wood-pigeons, having been taught to live upon flesh, until they have loathed their natural aliment. Young children evidently prefer pastry, oranges, apples, and other fruit, to the flesh

* Cuvier, Leçons d'Anat. Comp. tom. iii. pages 169, 373, 448, 465, 480. Rees's Cyclopædia, article Man.

of animals; until, by the gradual depravation of the digestive organs, the free use of vegetables has for a time produced serious inconveniences; *for a time*, I say, since there never was an instance wherein a change from spirituous liquors and animal food to vegetables and pure water, has failed ultimately to invigorate the body, by rendering its juices bland and consentaneous, and to restore to the mind that cheerfulness and elasticity, which not one in fifty possesses on the present system. A love of strong liquors is also with difficulty taught to infants. Almost every one remembers the wry faces which the first glass of port produced. Unsophisticated instinct is invariably unerring; but to decide on the fitness of animal food, from the perverted appetites which its constrained adoption produces, is to make the criminal a judge in his own cause: it is even worse, it is appealing to the infatuated drunkard in a question of the salubrity of brandy.

What is the cause of morbid action in the animal system? Not the air we breathe, for our fellow denizens of nature breathe the same uninjured; not the water we drink (if remote from the pollutions of man and his inventions*), for the animals drink it too; not the earth we tread upon; not the unobscured sight of glorious nature, in the wood, the field, or the expanse of sky and ocean; nothing that we are or do in common with the undiseased inhabitants of the forest. Something then wherein we differ from them: our habit of altering our food by fire, so that our appetite is no longer a just criterion for the fitness of its gratification. Except in children, there remain no traces of that instinct which determines, in all

* The necessity of resorting to some means of purifying water, and the disease which arises from its adulteration in civilized countries, is sufficiently apparent.—See Dr. Lambe's Reports on Cancer. I do not assert that the use of water is in itself unnatural, but that the unperverted palate would swallow no liquid capable of occasioning disease.

other animals, what aliment is natural or otherwise; and so perfectly obliterated are they in the reasoning adults of our species, that it has become necessary to urge considerations drawn from comparative anatomy, to prove that we are naturally frugivorous.

Crime is madness. Madness is disease. Whenever the cause of disease shall be discovered, the root, from which all vice and misery have so long overshadowed the globe, will lie bare to the axe. All the exertions of man, from that moment, may be considered as tending to the clear profit of his species. No sane mind in a sane body resolves upon a real crime. It is a man of violent passions, blood-shot eyes, and swollen veins, that alone can grasp the knife of murder. The system of a simple diet promises no Utopian advantages. It is no mere reform of legislation, whilst the furious passions and evil propensities of the human heart, in which it had its origin, are still unassuaged. It strikes at the root of all evil, and is an experiment which may be tried with success, not alone by nations, but by small societies, families, and even individuals. In no cases has a return to vegetable diet produced the slightest injury; in most it has been attended with changes undeniably beneficial. Should ever a physician be born with the genius of Locke, I am persuaded that he might trace all bodily and mental derangements to our unnatural habits, as clearly as that philosopher has traced all knowledge to sensation. What prolific sources of disease are not those mineral and vegetable poisons that have been introduced for its extirpation! How many thousands have become murderers and robbers, bigots and domestic tyrants, dissolute and abandoned adventurers, from the use of fermented liquors; who, had they slaked their thirst only with pure water, would have lived but to diffuse the happiness of their own unperverted feelings? How many groundless opinions and absurd institutions have not received a general

sanction from the sottishness and intemperance of individuals! Who will assert that, had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature, they would have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre? Could a set of men, whose passions were not perverted by unnatural stimuli, look with coolness on an *auto da fè?* Is it to be believed that a being of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots, would take delight in sports of blood? Was Nero a man of temperate life? Could you read calm health in his cheeks, flushed with ungovernable propensities of hatred for the human race? Did Muley Ismael's pulse beat evenly, was his skin transparent, did his eyes beam with healthfulness, and its invariable concomitants, cheerfulness and benignity? Though history has decided none of these questions, a child could not hesitate to answer in the negative. Surely the bile-suffused cheek of Buonaparte, his wrinkled brow, and yellow eye, the ceaseless inquietude of his nervous system, speak no less plainly the character of his unresting ambition than his murders and his victories. It is impossible, had Buonaparte descended from a race of vegetable feeders, that he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons. The desire of tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual, the power to tyrannize would certainly not be delegated by a society neither frenzied by inebriation, nor rendered impotent and irrational by disease. Pregnant indeed with inexhaustible calamity is the renunciation of instinct, as it concerns our physical nature; arithmetic cannot enumerate, nor reason perhaps suspect, the multitudinous sources of disease in civilized life. Even common water, that apparently innoxious *pabulum*, when corrupted by the filth of populous cities, is a deadly and insidious destroyer.* Who can wonder

* Lambe's Reports on Cancer.

that all the inducements held out by God himself in the Bible to virtue should have been vainer than a nurse's tale; and that those dogmas, by which he has there excited and justified the most ferocious propensities, should have alone been deemed essential; whilst Christians are in the daily practice of all those habits which have infected with disease and crime, not only the reprobate sons, but these favoured children of the common Father's love. Omnipotence itself could not save them from the consequences of this original and universal sin.

There is no disease, bodily or mental, which adoption of vegetable diet and pure water has not infallibly mitigated, wherever the experiment has been fairly tried. Debility is gradually converted into strength, disease into healthfulness; madness, in all its hideous variety, from the ravings of the fettered maniac, to the unaccountable irrationalities of ill temper, that make a hell of domestic life, into a calm and considerate evenness of temper, that alone might offer a certain pledge of the future moral reformation of society. On a natural system of diet, old age would be our last and our only malady; the term of our existence would be protracted; we should enjoy life, and no longer preclude others from the enjoyment of it; all sensational delights would be infinitely more exquisite and perfect; the very sense of being would then be a continued pleasure, such as we now feel it in some few and favoured moments of our youth. By all that is sacred in our hopes for the human race, I conjure those who love happiness and truth, to give a fair trial to the vegetable system. Reasoning is surely superfluous on a subject whose merits an experience of six months would set for ever at rest. But it is only among the enlightened and benevolent that so great a sacrifice of appetite and prejudice can be expected, even though its ultimate excellence should not admit of dispute. It is found easier, by the short-sighted victims of disease, to palliate their

torments by medicine, than to prevent them by regimen. The vulgar of all ranks are invariably sensual and indocile; yet I cannot but feel myself persuaded, that when the benefits of vegetable diet are mathematically proved; when it is as clear, that those who live naturally are exempt from premature death, as that nine is not one, the most sottish of mankind will feel a preference towards a long and tranquil, contrasted with a short and painful life. On the average, out of sixty persons, four die in three years. Hopes are entertained that in April, 1814, a statement will be given that sixty persons, all having lived more than three years on vegetables and pure water, are then *in perfect health.* More than two years have now elapsed; *not one of them has died;* no such example will be found in any sixty persons taken at random. Seventeen persons of all ages (the families of Dr. Lambe and Mr. Newton) have lived for seven years on this diet without a death, and almost without the slightest illness. Surely, when we consider that some of these were infants, and one a martyr to asthma now nearly subdued, we may challenge any seventeen persons taken at random in this city to exhibit a parallel case. Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet, by these loose remarks, should consult Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay.*

When these proofs come fairly before the world, and are clearly seen by all who understand arithmetic, it is scarcely possible that abstinence from aliments demonstrably pernicious should not become universal. In proportion to the number of proselytes, so will be the weight of evidence; and when a thousand persons can be produced, living on vegetables and distilled water, who have to dread no disease but old age, the world will be compelled to regard animal flesh and fermented liquors as

* Return to Nature, or Defence of Vegetable Regimen. Cadell, 18[illegible]

slow but certain poisons. The change which would be produced by simpler habits on political economy, is sufficiently remarkable. The monopolizing eater of animal flesh would no longer destroy his constitution by devouring an acre at a meal, and many loaves of bread would cease to contribute to gout, madness, and apoplexy, in the shape of a pint of porter, or a dram of gin, when appeasing the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant's hungry babes. The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcase of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance, undepraving indeed, and incapable of generating disease, if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth. The most fertile districts of the habitable globe are now actually cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation. It is only the wealthy that can, to any great degree, even now, indulge the unnatural craving for dead flesh, and they pay for the greater licence of the privilege, by subjection to supernumerary diseases. Again, the spirit of the nation that should take the lead in this great reform, would insensibly become agricultural; commerce, with all its vices, selfishness, and corruption, would gradually decline; more natural habits would produce gentler manners, and the excessive complication of political relations would be so far simplified, that every individual might feel and understand why he loved his country, and took a personal interest in its welfare. How would England, for example, depend on the caprices of foreign rulers, if she contained within herself all the necessaries, and despised whatever they possessed of the luxuries of life? How could they starve her into compliance with their views? Of what consequence would it be that they refused to take her woollen manufactures, when large and fertile tracts of the island ceased to be allotted to the waste of pasturage? On a natural system of diet, we

should require no spices from India; no wines from Portugal, Spain, France, or Madeira; none of those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled, and which are the causes of so much individual rivalship, such calamitous and sanguinary national disputes. In the history of modern times, the avarice of commercial monopoly, no less than the ambition of weak and wicked chiefs, seems to have fomented the universal discord, to have added stubbornness to the mistakes of cabinets, and indocility to the infatuation of the people. Let it ever be remembered, that it is the direct influence of commerce to make the interval between the richest and the poorest man, wider and more unconquerable. Let it be remembered, that it is a foe to everything of real worth and excellence in the human character. The odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth is built upon the ruins of all that is good in chivalry or republicanism; and luxury is the forerunner of a barbarism scarce capable of cure. Is it impossible to realize a state of society where all the energies of man shall be directed to the production of his solid happiness? Certainly, if this advantage (the object of all political speculation) be in any degree attainable, it is attainable only by a community which holds out no factitious incentives to the avarice and ambition of the few, and which is internally organized for the liberty, security and comfort of the many. None must be entrusted with power (and money is the completest species of power) who do not stand pledged to use it exclusively for the general benefit. But the use of animal flesh and fermented liquors directly militates with this equality of the rights of man. The peasant cannot gratify these fashionable cravings without leaving his family to starve. Without disease and war, those sweeping curtailers of population, pasturage would include a waste too great to be afforded. The labour requisite to

support a family is far lighter* than is usually supposed. The peasantry work, not only for themselves, but for the aristocracy, the army, and the manufacturers.

The advantage of a reform in diet is obviously greater than that of any other. It strikes at the root of the evil. To remedy the abuses of legislation, before we annihilate the propensities by which they are produced, is to suppose that by taking away the effect, the cause will cease to operate. But the efficacy of this system depends entirely on the proselytism of individuals, and grounds its merits, as a benefit to the community, upon the total change of the dietetic habits in its members. It proceeds securely from a number of particular cases to one that is universal, and has this advantage over the contrary mode, that one error does not invalidate all that has gone before.

Let not too much, however, be expected from this system. The healthiest among us is not exempt from hereditary disease. The most symmetrical, athletic, and long-lived is a being inexpressibly inferior to what he would have been, had not the unnatural habits of his ancestors accumulated for him a certain portion of malady and deformity. In the most perfect specimen of civilized man, something is still found wanting by the physiological critic. Can a return to nature, then, instantaneously eradicate predispositions that have been slowly taking root in the silence of innumerable ages?—Indubitably not. All that I contend for is, that from the

* It has come under the author's experience, that some of the workmen on an embankment in North Wales, who, in consequence of the inability of the proprietor to pay them seldom received their wages, have supported large families by cultivating small spots of sterile ground by moonlight. In the notes to Pratt's Poem, "Bread, or the Poor," is an account of an industrious labourer, who, by working in a small garden, before and after his day's task, attained to an enviable state of independence.

moment of the relinquishing all unnatural habits, no new disease is generated; and that the predisposition to hereditary maladies gradually perishes, for want of its accustomed supply. In cases of consumption, cancer, gout, asthma, and scrofula, such is the invariable tendency of a diet of vegetables and pure water.

Those who may be induced by these remarks to give the vegetable system a fair trial, should, in the first place, date the commencement of their practice from the moment of their conviction. All depends upon breaking through a pernicious habit resolutely, and at once. Dr. Trotter* asserts, that no drunkard was ever reformed by gradually relinquishing his dram. Animal flesh, in its effects on the human stomach, is analogous to a dram. It is similar in the kind, though differing in the degree, of its operation. The proselyte to a pure diet must be warned to expect a temporary diminution of muscular strength. The subtraction of a powerful stimulus will suffice to account for this event. But it is only temporary, and is succeeded by an equable capability for exertion, far surpassing his former various and fluctuating strength. Above all, he will acquire an easiness of breathing, by which such exertion is performed, with a remarkable exemption from that painful and difficult panting now felt by almost every one, after hastily climbing an ordinary mountain. He will be equally capable of bodily exertion, or mental application, after as before his simple meal. He will feel none of the narcotic effects of ordinary diet. Irritability, the direct consequence of exhausting stimuli, would yield to the power of natural and tranquil impulses. He will no longer pine under the lethargy of *ennui*, that unconquerable weariness of life, more to be dreaded than death itself. He will escape the epidemic madness, which broods over its own injurious notions of the Deity, and

* See Trotter on the Nervous Temperament.

"realizes the hell that priests and beldams feign." Every man forms as it were his god from his own character; to the divinity of one of simple habits, no offering would be more acceptable than the happiness of his creatures. He would be incapable of hating or persecuting others for the love of God. He will find, moreover, a system of simple diet to be a system of perfect epicurism. He will no longer be incessantly occupied in blunting and destroying those organs from which he expects his gratification. The pleasures of taste to be derived from a dinner of potatoes, beans, peas, turnips, lettuces, with a dessert of apples, gooseberries, strawberries, currants, raspberries, and, in winter, oranges, apples, and pears, is far greater than is supposed. Those who wait until they can eat this plain fare with the sauce of appetite will scarcely join with the hypocritical sensualist at a lord-mayor's feast, who declaims against the pleasures of the table. Solomon kept a thousand concubines, and owned in despair that all was vanity. The man whose happiness is constituted by the society of one amiable woman, would find some difficulty in sympathizing with the disappointment of this venerable debauchee.

I address myself not only to the young enthusiast, the ardent devotee of truth and virtue, the pure and passionate moralist, yet unvitiated by the contagion of the world. He will embrace a pure system, from its abstract truth, its beauty, its simplicity, and its promise of wide-extended benefit; unless custom has turned poison into food, he will hate the brutal pleasures of the chase by instinct; it will be a contemplation full of horror and disappointment to his mind, that beings capable of the gentlest and most admirable sympathies, should take delight in the death-pangs and last convulsions of dying animals. The elderly man, whose youth has been poisoned by intemperance, or who has lived with apparent moderation, and is afflicted with a variety of painful

maladies, would find his account in a beneficial change, produced without the risk of poisonous medicines. The mother, to whom the perpetual restlessness of disease, and unaccountable deaths incident to her children, are the causes of incurable unhappiness, would on this diet experience the satisfaction of beholding their perpetual healths and natural playfulness.*

The most valuable lives are daily destroyed by diseases, that it is dangerous to palliate and impossible to cure by medicine. How much longer will man continue to pimp for the gluttony of death, his most insidious, implacable, and eternal foe?

Ἀλλὰ δράκοντας ἀγρίους καλεῖτε καὶ παρδάλεις καὶ λέοντας, αὐτοὶ δὲ μιαιφονεῖτε εἰς ὠμότητα καταλιπόντες ἐκείνους οὐδέν. Ἐκείνοις μὲν γὰρ ὁ φόνος τροφὴ, ὑμῖν δ' ὄψον ἐστίν.

* * * * *

Ὅτι γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνυρώπῳ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ σαρκοφαγεῖν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων δηλοῦται τῆς κατασκευῆς. Οὐδενὶ γὰρ ζοικε τὸ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα τῶν ἐπὶ σαρκοφαγίᾳ γεγονότων, οὐ γρυπότης χείλους, οὐκ ὀξύτης ὄνυχος, οὐ τραχύτης ὀδόντων πρόσεστιν, οὐ κοιλίας εὐτονία καὶ πνεύματος θερμότης, τρέψαι καὶ κατεργάσασθαι δυνατὴ τό βαρὺ καὶ κρεῶδες. Ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ἡ φύσις τῇ λειότητι τῶν ὀδόντων, καὶ τῇ σμικρότητι τοῦ στόματος, καὶ τῇ μαλακότητι

* See Mr. Newton's book. His children are the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive; the girls are perfect models for a sculptor; their dispositions are also the most gentle and conciliating; the judicious treatment which they experience in other points, may be a correlative cause of this. In the first five years of their life, of 18,000 children that are born, 7,500 die of various diseases; and how many more of those that survive are not rendered miserable by maladies not immediately mortal? The quality and quantity of a woman's milk are materially injured by the use of dead flesh. In an island, near Iceland, where no vegetables are to be got, the children invariably die of tetanus, before they are three weeks old, and the population is supplied from the main land. —*Sir G. Mackenzie's Hist. of Iceland.* See also *Emile*, chap. i. pp. 53, 54, 56.

τῆς γλώσσης, καὶ τῇ πρὸς πέψιν ἀμβλύτητι τοῦ πνεύματος; ἐξόμνυται τὴν σαρκοφαγίαν. Εἰ δὲ λέγεις, πεφυκέναι σεαυτὸν ἐπὶ τοιαύτην ἐδωδὴν, ὅ βούλει φαγεῖν, πρῶτος αὐτὸς ἀπόκτεινον· ἀλλ' αὐτὸς, διὰ σεαυτοῦ, μὴ χρηστάμενος κοπίδι, μηδὲ τυμπάνῳ τινὶ μηδὲ πελέκει· ἀλλὰ, ὡς λύκοι καὶ ἄρκτοι, καὶ λέοντες αὐτοὶ ὡς ἐσθίουσι φονεύσιν, ἄνελε δήγματι ῥοῦν, ἢ σώματι σῦν, ἢ ἄρνα ἢ λαγωὸν διάρρηξον, καὶ φάγε προσπεσὼν ἔτι ζῶντος ὡς ἐκεῖνα.

* * * * *

Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὕτως ἐν τῷ μιαιφόνῳ τρυφῶμεν, ὥστε ὄψον τὸ κρέας προσαγορεύομεν εἶτα ὄψων πρὸς αὐτὸ τὰ κρέα ὀ[illegible], ἀναμιγνύντες ἔλαιον, οἶνον, μέλι, γάρον, ὄξος, ἡδύσμασι Συριακοῖς, Ἀράβικοῖς, ὥσπερ ὄντως νεκρὸν ἐταριχεύοντες. Καὶ γὰρ ὄντως αὐτῶν διαλυθέντων καὶ μαλαχθέντων καὶ τρόπον τινὰ κρεοσαπέντων ὕστερον ἐστὶ τὴν πέψιν κρατῆσαι· καὶ διακρατεθείσης δὲ δεινὰς Βαρύτητας καὶ μοσώδεις ἀπεψίας.

* * * * *

Οὕτω τὸ πρῶτον ἄγριον τι ζῶον ἐρρώθη καὶ κακοῦργον. εἶτα ὄρνις τις ἢ ἰχθὺς εἱλκυστο· καὶ γεύσμενον οὕτω καὶ πρυμελετήσαν ἐν ἐκείνοις τὸ νικοῦν, ἐπὶ βοῦν ἐργάτην ἦλθε, καὶ τὸ κοσμοῦν πρόβατον, καὶ τὸν οἰκουρὸν ἀλεκτρύονα· καὶ κατα μικρὸν οὕτω τὴν ἀπληστιάν τονώσαντες, ἐπὶ σφαγὰς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ φόνους καὶ πολέμους προῆλθον.*

Πλουτ. περὶ τῆς σαρκοφαγίας.

[The substance of this note, with some additions, appeared shortly afterwards in a pamphlet form under the title of *A Vindication of Natural Diet, being one of a series of Notes to Queen Mab, a Philosophical Poem*, pp. 43. On the title is a motto from Hesiod's Works and Days. The additions made in this pamphlet are curious and worth preservation. Thus, after speaking of "Mr. Newton's luminous and eloquent essay" (*vide antea*, p. 353), Shelley goes on to say :—

"It is from that book, and from the conversation of its

excellent and enlightened author, that I have derived the materials which I here present to the public."

The pamphlet omits the Greek quotation from Plutarch, and concludes thus :—

"The proselyte to a simple and natural diet who desires health, must from the moment of his conversion attend to these rules :—

NEVER TAKE ANY SUBSTANCE INTO THE STOMACH THAT ONCE HAD LIFE.

DRINK NO LIQUID BUT WATER RESTORED TO ITS ORIGINAL PURITY BY DISTILLATION.

APPENDIX.

Persons on vegetable diet have been remarkable for longevity. The first Christians practised abstinence from animal flesh, on a principle of self-mortification.

1. Old Parr 152
   Cheyne's Essay on Health, p. 62.
2. Mary Patten 136
   Gent. Mag., vii–449.
3. A shepherd in Hungary 126
   Morning Post, Jan. 28, 1800.
4. Patrick O'Neale 113
   Emile, 1–44.
5. Joseph Elkins 103
   He died at Coombe, in Northumberland.
6. Elizabeth de Val 101
   Scots Magazine, xxxiv–696.
7. Aurungzebe 100
   Aurungzebe, from the time of his usurpation, adhered strictly to the vegetable system.

St. Anthony 105
James the Hermit 104
Arsenius 120

St. Epiphanius	115
Simeon	112
Rombald	120

Mr. Newton's mode of reasoning on longevity is ingenious and conclusive.

"Old Parr, healthy as the wild animals, attained to the age of 152 years.

"All men might be as healthy as the wild animals.

"Therefore all men might attain to the age of 152 years." (*Return to Nature.*)

The conclusion is sufficiently modest. Old Parr cannot be supposed to have escaped the inheritance of disease amassed by the unnatural habits of his ancestors. The term of human life may be expected to be infinitely greater, taking into the consideration all the circumstances that must have contributed to abridge even that of Parr.

It may be here remarked, that the author and his wife have lived on vegetables for eight months. The improvements of health and temper here stated is the result of his own experience.

QUEEN MAB AND ITS AUTHOR.

To the Editor of THE EXAMINER.

"SIR,—Having heard that a poem, entitled *Queen Mab*, has been surreptitiously published in London, and that legal proceedings have been instituted against the publisher, I request the favour of your insertion of the following explanation of the affair as it relates to me.

"A poem, entitled *Queen Mab*, was written by me at the age of eighteen, I dare say in a sufficiently intemperate

spirit—but even then was not intended for publication, and a few copies only were struck off, to be distributed among my personal friends. I have not seen this production for several years: I doubt not but that it is perfectly worthless in point of literary composition; and that in all that concerns moral and political speculation, as well as in the subtler discriminations of metaphysical and religious doctrine, it is still more crude and immature. I am a devoted enemy to religious, political, and domestic oppression; and I regret this publication, not so much from literary vanity, as because I fear it is better fitted to injure than to serve the cause of freedom. I have directed my solicitor to apply to Chancery for an injunction to restrain the sale; but after the precedent of Mr. Southey's *Wat Tyler* (a poem, written, I believe, at the same age, and with the same unreflecting enthusiasm), with little hopes of success.

"Whilst I exonerate myself from all share in having divulged opinions hostile to existing sanctions, under the form, whatever it may be, which they assume in this poem, it is scarcely necessary for me to protest against the system of inculcating the truth of Christianity and the excellence of Monarchy, however true or however excellent they may be, by such equivocal arguments as confiscation, and imprisonment, and invective, and slander, and the insolent violation of the most sacred ties of nature and society.

"Sir, I am,
"Your obliged and obedient servant,
"PERCY B. SHELLEY."*

"Pisa, June 22, 1821."

* Printed in *The Examiner*, July 15, 1821.

ALASTOR;

OR

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE:

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY, PATER-
NOSTER ROW; AND CARPENTER AND SON,
OLD BOND-STREET:
By S. Hamilton, Weybridge, Surrey.

1816.

[*Facsimile title page of first edition.*]

PREFACE.

THE poem entitled 'Alastor,' may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover, could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them

to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings, live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

> 'The good die first,
> And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
> Burn to the socket!'*

The fragment entitled 'THE DEMON OF THE WORLD,' is a detached part of a poem which the author does not intend for publication. The metre in which it is composed is that of Samson Agonistes and the Italian pastoral drama, and may be considered as the natural measure into which poetical conceptions, expressed in harmonious language, necessarily fall.

December 14, 1815.

* These lines are from the first book of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, then newly published.—ED.

ALASTOR;

OR,

THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE.

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem, amans mare.—*Confess. St. August.*

ARTH, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherish'd these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watch'd
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death

Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mix'd awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charming night
To render up thy charge: ... and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveil'd thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence rear'd,
But the charm'd eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:—
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden deck'd
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:—
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:

He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he past, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamour'd of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscover'd lands.
Many a wild waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps ; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.

Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruin'd temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble demons watch
The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He linger'd, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Fill'd the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flash'd like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps :—
Enamour'd, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love :—and watch'd his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose : then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wilder'd and wan and panting, she return'd.

The Poet wandering on, through Araby,
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way ;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretch'd
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flush'd his cheek. He dream'd a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought ; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-colour'd woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire : wild numbers then

She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turn'd,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretch'd and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sicken'd with excess
Of love. He rear'd his shuddering limbs and quell'd
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:... she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veil'd his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallow'd up the vision: sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Roll'd back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,

The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurn'd
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flow'd on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awaken'd, stung
His brain even like despair.

While day-light held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distemper'd dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasp'd
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness: thus driven

By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawn'd upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wander'd on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wander'd on;
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scatter'd hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its wither'd skin:
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who minister'd with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deem'd that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career: the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names

Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approach'd, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird; thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he look'd around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandon'd, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints

Sway'd with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny, sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leap'd in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast*
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues

* So the first edition reads. In all the posthumous editions, *ruining* is altered to "running." Perhaps some ingenious editor of the future will give us a similar emendation in Tennyson's *Lucretius*:—"*Running* along the illimitable inane"!—ED.

High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of day;
Night follow'd, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rush'd in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form,
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose cavern'd base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms.
The shatter'd mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawn'd, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulf'd the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.—'Vision and Love!'
The Poet cried aloud, 'I have beheld

The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long!'

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven.
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Fill'd with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretch'd their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round.
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!

The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marr'd their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturb'd before. The Poet long'd
To deck with their bright hues his wither'd hair,
But on his heart its solitude return'd,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flush'd cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame
Had yet perform'd its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scoop'd in the dark base of their aëry rocks
Mocking its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below

Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starr'd with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines

Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustom'd presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seem'd
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrow'd from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
But, undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only. . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seem'd with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flow'd. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polish'd stones
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—'O stream!
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?

Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course
Have each their type in me: and the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretch'd
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!'

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemm'd
The struggling brook: tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarled roots of ancient pines,
Branchless and blasted, clench'd with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white; and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs:—so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds

And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Roll'd through the labyrinthine dell ; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo ! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world : for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-colour'd even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretch'd athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the gray precipice and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all ;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,

Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlook'd in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seem'd to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasp'd
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude :—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes ;—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned moon hung low, and pour'd
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflow'd its mountains. Yellow mist
Fill'd the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fullness : not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice

Slept, clasp'd in his embrace.—O, storm of death!
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night:
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou may'st repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marr'd his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloy'd by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed

The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling :—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seem'd
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still :
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleam'd through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night :—till the minutest ray
Was quench'd, the pulse yet linger'd in his heart.
It paused—it flutter'd. But when heaven remain'd
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour fed with golden beams
That minister'd on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wond'rous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quench'd for ever
Still, dark, and dry, and unremember'd now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance ! O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drain'd, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels

No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his vision'd cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation; which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice;—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips,
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their light to shade.
It is a woe too 'deep for tears,' when all

Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorn'd the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs, or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

POEMS.

ΔΑΚΡΥΕΙ ΔΙΟΙΣΩ ΠΟΤΜΟΝ ΑΠΟΤΜΟΝ.

THERE are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees:—
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turn'd from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things
Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee; but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth:—tame sacrifice
To a fond faith! still dost thou pine?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?

That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles.

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
The glory of the moon is dead;
Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;
Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase;—the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

STANZAS.—APRIL, 1814.

WAY! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.

Pause not! The time is past! Every voice cries, Away!
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood:
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay:
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around
thine head :
The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy feet :
But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds
the dead,
Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and
peace may meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the
deep :
Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows ;
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its appointed
sleep.

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phantoms flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear to
thee erewhile,
Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings are
not free
From the music of two voices and the light of one sweet
smile.

MUTABILITY.

WE are as clouds that veil the midnight moon ;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly !—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep ;
We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day ;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep ;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away :

It is the same !—For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free :
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow ;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." ECCLESIASTES.

THE pale, the cold, and the moony smile
Which the meteor beam of a starless night
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,
Ere the dawning of moon's undoubted light,
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

O man ! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way.
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow
To a brain unencompass'd with nerves of steel ;
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
Where all but this frame must surely be,
Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
No longer will live to hear or to see

All that is great and all that is strange
In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?
Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the fears and the love for that which we see?

A SUMMER-EVENING CHURCHYARD, LECHLADE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;
And pallid evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of day
Silence and twilight, unbeloved of men,
Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;
Light, sound, and motion own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aërial Pile! whose pinnacles
Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
Obey'st in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
Around whose lessening and invisible height
Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres.
And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound

Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
And mingling with the still night and mute sky
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and soften'd, death is mild
And terrorless as this serenest night :
Here could I hope, like some inquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

TO WORDSWORTH.

POET of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return :
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar :
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude :
In honour'd poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

FEELINGS OF A REPUBLICAN ON THE FALL OF BONAPARTE.

HATED thee, fall'n tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, should'st dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou might'st have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now: thou did'st prefer
A frail and bloody pomp, which time has swept
In fragments towards oblivion. Massacre,
For this I pray'd, would on thy sleep have crept,
Treason, and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than force or fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of time.

SONNET.

FROM THE ITALIAN OF DANTE.

Dante Alighieri to Guido Cavalcanti.

UIDO, I would that Lappo, thou, and I,
Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend
A magic ship, whose charmed sails should fly
With winds at will where'er our thoughts might wend,
And that no change, nor any evil chance,
Should mar our joyous voyage; but it might be,
That even satiety should still enhance
Between our hearts their strict community.
And that the bounteous wizard then would place
Vanna and Bice and my gentle love,
Companions of our wandering, and would grace
With passionate talk wherever we might rove
Our time, and each were as content and free
As I believe that thou and I should be.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF MOSCHUS.*

WHEN winds that move not its calm surface sweep
The azure sea, I love the land no more;
The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
Tempt my unquiet mind.—But when the roar
Of ocean's gray abyss resounds, and foam
Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
I turn from the drear aspect to the home
Of earth and its deep woods, where interspersed,
When winds blow loud, pines make sweet melody.
Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the sea,
Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
Has chosen.—But I my languid limbs will fling
Beneath the plane, where the brook's murmuring
Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

THE DEMON OF THE WORLD.

A FRAGMENT.†

"Nec tantum prodere vati
Quantum scire licet. Venit ætas omnis in unam
Congeriem, miserumque premunt tot sæcula pectus."
LUCAN PHARS. v. 176.

HOW wonderful is Death,
Death and his brother Sleep!
One pale as yonder wan and horned moon,
With lips of lurid blue;
The other glowing like the vital morn,

* Idyll. v.

† The reader will perceive that *The Demon of the World* is a fragment of *Queen Mab* so much altered as virtually to constitute a new poem.—ED

When throned on ocean's wave
It breathes over the world :
Yet both so passing strange and wonderful !

Hath then the iron-sceptred Skeleton,
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres,
To the hell dogs that couch beneath his throne
Cast that fair prey? Must that divinest form,
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, whose azure veins
Steal like dark streams along a field of snow,
Whose outline is as fair as marble clothed
In light of some sublimest mind, decay ?
Nor putrefaction's breath
Leave aught of this pure spectacle
But loathsomeness and ruin ?—
Spare aught but a dark theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize ?
Or is it but that downy-winged slumbers
Have charm'd their nurse coy Silence near her lids
To watch their own repose ?
Will they, when morning's beam
Flows through those wells of light,
Seek far from noise and day some western cave,
Where woods and streams with soft and pausing winds
A lulling murmur weave ?—

Ianthe doth not sleep
The dreamless sleep of death :
Nor in her moonlight chamber silently
Doth Henry hear her regular pulses throb,
Or mark her delicate cheek
With interchange of hues mock the broad moon,
Outwatching weary night,
Without assured reward.
Her dewy eyes are closed ;
On their translucent lids, whose texture fine

Scarce hides the dark blue orbs that burn below
With unapparent fire,
The baby Sleep is pillow'd :
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Twining like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark ! whence that rushing sound ?
'Tis like a wondrous strain that sweeps
Around a lonely ruin.
When west winds sigh and evening waves respond
In whispers from the shore :
'Tis wilder than the unmeasured notes
Which from the unseen lyres of dells and groves
The genii of the breezes sweep.
Floating on waves of music and of light
The chariot of the Demon of the World
Descends in silent power :
Its shape reposed within : slight as some cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of day
When evening yields to night,
Bright as that fibrous woof when stars indue
Its transitory robe.

Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light
Check their unearthly speed ; they stop and fold
Their wings of braided air :
The Demon leaning from the ethereal car
Gazed on the slumbering maid.
Human eye hath ne'er beheld
A shape so wild, so bright, so beautiful,
As that which o'er the maiden's charmed sleep
Waving a starry wand,
Hung like a mist of light.

Such sounds as breathed around like odorous winds
Of wakening spring arose,
Filling the chamber and the moonlight sky.

Maiden, the world's supremest spirit
Beneath the shadow of her wings
Folds all thy memory doth inherit
From ruin of divinest things,
Feelings that lure thee to betray,
And light of thoughts that pass away.

For thou hast earn'd a mighty boon,
The truths which wisest poets see
Dimly, thy mind may make its own,
Rewarding its own majesty,
Entranced in some diviner mood
Of self-oblivious solitude.

Custom, and Faith, and Power thou spurnest;
From hate and awe thy heart is free;
Ardent and pure as day thou burnest,
For dark and cold mortality
A living light, to cheer it long,
The watch-fires of the world among.

Therefore from nature's inner shrine,
Where gods and fiends in worship bend,
Majestic spirit, be it thine
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,
Where the vast snake Eternity
In charmed sleep doth ever lie.

All that inspires thy voice of love,
Or speaks in thy unclosing eyes,
Or through thy frame doth burn or move,
Or think or feel, awake, arise!
Spirit, leave for mine and me
Earth's unsubstantial mimicry!

It ceased, and from the mute and moveless frame
A radiant spirit arose,
All beautiful in naked purity.
Robed in its human hues it did ascend,
Disparting as it went the silver clouds
It moved towards the car, and took its seat
Beside the Demon shape.

Obedient to the sweep of aëry song,
The mighty ministers
Unfurl'd their prismy wings.
The magic car moved on;
The night was fair, innumerable stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault:
The eastern wave grew pale
With the first smile of morn.

The magic car moved on.
From the swift sweep of wings
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew;
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now far above a rock the utmost verge
Of the wide earth it flew,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Frown'd o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's stormy path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous ocean lay.
Its broad and silent mirror gave to view
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,
And the grey light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That cradled in their folds the infant dawn.

The chariot seem'd to fly
Through the abyss of an immense concave,
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite colour,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

As they approach'd their goal,
The winged shadows seem'd to gather speed.
The sea no longer was distinguish'd ; earth
Appear'd a vast and shadowy sphere, suspended
In the black concave of heaven
With the sun's cloudless orb,
Whose rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell like ocean's feathery spray
Dash'd from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appear'd
The smallest light that twinkles in the heavens,
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems widely roll'd,
And countless spheres diffused
An ever varying glory.

It was a sight of wonder ! Some were horn'd,
And, like the moon's argentine crescent hung
In the dark dome of heaven, some did shed
A clear mild beam like Hesperus, while the sea
Yet glows with fading sunlight ; others dash'd
Athwart the night with trains of bickering fire,
Like sphered worlds to death and ruin driven ;
Some shone like stars, and as the chariot pass'd
Bedimm'd all other light.

Spirit of Nature ! here
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose involved immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple.
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee,—
Yet not the meanest worm,
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
Less shares thy eternal breath.
Spirit of Nature ! thou
Imperishable as this glorious scene,
Here is thy fitting temple.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the shore of the immeasurable sea,
And thou hast linger'd there
Until the sun's broad orb
Seem'd resting on the fiery line of ocean,
Thou must have mark'd the braided webs of gold
That without motion hang
Over the sinking sphere ;
Thou must have mark'd the billowy mountain clouds,
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet
Above the burning deep :
And yet there is a moment
When the sun's highest point
Peers like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery purple gleam
Like fairy lands girt by some heavenly sea :
Then has thy rapt imagination soar'd
Where in the midst of all existing things
The temple of the mightiest Demon stands
Yet not the golden islands

That gleam amid yon flood of purple light,
Nor the feathery curtains
That canopy the sun's resplendent couch,
Nor the burnish'd ocean waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair so wonderful a sight
As the eternal temple could afford.
The elements of all that human thought
Can frame of lovely or sublime, did join
To rear the fabric of the fane, nor aught
Of earth may image forth its majesty.
Yet likest evening's vault that faëry hall,
As heaven low resting on the wave it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome;
And on the verge of that obscure abyss
Where crystal battlements o'erhang the gulf
Of the dark world, ten thousand spheres diffuse
Their lustre through its adamantine gates.

The magic car no longer moved;
The Demon and the Spirit
Enter'd the eternal gates.
Those clouds of aery gold
That slept in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not;
While slight and odorous mists
Floated to strains of thrilling melody
Through the vast columns and the pearly shrines.

The Demon and the Spirit
Approach'd the overhanging battlement.
Below lay stretch'd the boundless universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That limits swift imagination's flight,

Unending orbs mingled in mazy motion,
Immutably fulfilling
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around,
The circling systems form'd
A wilderness of harmony,
Each with undeviating aim
In eloquent silence through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.—

Awhile the Spirit paused in ecstasy.
Yet soon she saw, as the vast spheres swept by,
Strange things within their belted orbs appear.
Like animated frenzies, dimly moved
Shadows, and skeletons, and fiendly shapes,
Thronging round human graves, and o'er the dead
Sculpturing records for each memory
In verse, such as malignant gods pronounce,
Blasting the hopes of men, when heaven and hell
Confounded burst in ruin o'er the world:
And they did build vast trophies, instruments
Of murder, human bones, barbaric gold,
Skins torn from living men, and towers of skulls
With sightless holes gazing on blinder heaven,
Mitres, and crowns, and brazen chariots stain'd
With blood, and scrolls of mystic wickedness,
The sanguine codes of venerable crime.
The likeness of a throned king came by,
When these had past, bearing upon his brow
A threefold crown; his countenance was calm,
His eye severe and cold; but his right hand
Was charged with bloody coin, and he did gnaw
By fits, with secret smiles, a human heart
Conceal'd beneath his robe; and motley shapes,
A multitudinous throng, around him knelt,
With bosoms bare, and bow'd heads, and false looks

Of true submission, as the sphere roll'd by,
Brooking no eye to witness their foul shame,
Which human hearts must feel, while human tongues
Tremble to speak, they did rage horribly,
Breathing in self contempt fierce blasphemies
Against the Demon of the World, and high
Hurling their armed hands where the pure Spirit,
Serene and inaccessibly secure,
Stood on an isolated pinnacle,
The flood of ages combating below
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Necessity's unchanging harmony.

MONT BLANC.

LINES WRITTEN IN THE VALE OF CHAMOUNI.*

I.

THE everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II.

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
Thou many-colour'd, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning thro' the tempest;—thou dost lie,

* First published in 1817, in a little volume entitled *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*—the joint production of Percy and Mary Shelley.—Ed.

The giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear—an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbows stretch'd across the sweep
Of the ethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;—
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

III.

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurl'd

The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles?—For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps,
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracts her there—how hideously
Its shapes are heap'd around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarr'd, and riven. Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-demon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelop once this silent snow?
None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be
But for such faith with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV.

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the dædal earth; lightning, and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,

The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower ;— the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap ;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be ;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die, revolve, subside and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
Remote, serene, and inaccessible :
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primæval mountains,
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on ; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled—dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky*
Rolls its perpetual stream ; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shatter'd stand ; the rocks drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaim'd. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds becomes its spoil ;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread ; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,

* Mr. Rossetti, in order to produce an imperfect rhyme with *ice*, has taken the unwarrantable liberty of altering the text here to "boundary of the skies."—ED.

And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrent's restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

V.

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high :—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain ; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them :—Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently ! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee !
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy ?

June 23, 1816.

LINES TO A CRITIC.*

ONEY from silkworms who can gather,
Or silk from the yellow bee?
The grass may grow in winter weather,
As soon as hate in me.

Hate men who cant, and men who pray,
And men who rail like thee;
An equal passion to repay,—
They are not coy like me.

Or seek some slave of power and gold,
To be thy dear heart's-mate,
Thy love will move that bigot cold,
Sooner than me, thy hate.

A passion like the one I prove
Cannot divided be;
I hate thy want of truth and love,
How should I then hate thee?

* These Lines, written in 1817, were first printed after Shelley's death, in the third number of 'The Liberal' (1823).—Ed

ROSALIND AND HELEN,

A MODERN ECLOGUE;

WITH

OTHER POEMS:

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. AND J. OLLIER,

VERE STREET, BOND STREET.

1819.

Facsimile title page of first edition.]

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE story of ROSALIND AND HELEN is, undoubtedly, not an attempt in the highest style of poetry. It is in no degree calculated to excite profound meditation ; and if, by interesting the affections and amusing the imagination, it awaken a certain ideal melancholy favourable to the reception of more important impressions, it will produce in the reader all that the writer experienced in the composition. I resigned myself, as I wrote, to the impulse of the feelings which moulded the conception of the story : and this impulse determined the pauses of a measure, which only pretends to be regular inasmuch as it corresponds with, and expresses, the irregularity of the imaginations which inspired it.

I do not know which of the few scattered poems I left in England will be selected by my bookseller, to add to this collection. One, which I sent from Italy, was written after a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat, and where is now the sepulchre, of Petrarch. If any one is inclined to condemn the insertion of the introductory lines, which image forth the sudden relief of a state of deep despondency by the radiant visions disclosed by the sudden burst of an Italian sunrise in autumn on the highest peak of those delightful moun-

tains, I can only offer as my excuse, that they were not erased at the request of a dear friend, with whom added years of intercourse only add to my apprehension of its value, and who would have had more right than any one to complain, that she has not been able to extinguish in one the very power of delineating sadness.

Naples, Dec. 20, 1818.

ROSALIND AND HELEN.

A MODERN ECLOGUE.

ROSALIND, HELEN, and her CHILD.
SCENE.—The Shore of the Lake of Como.

HELEN. Come hither, my sweet Rosalind,
'Tis long since thou and I have met;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven.
Come, gentle friend: wilt sit by me?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disunited?
None doth behold us now: the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn: oh! come,
And talk of our abandon'd home.
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me

Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chesnut woods:
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream:
Which that we have abandon'd now,
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which alter'd friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse.
That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me. Leave me not.—When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted,—do not frown:
I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken:
But turn to me. Oh! by this cherish'd token,
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 'twere but the memory of me,
And not my scorned self who pray'd to thee.

Rosalind. Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o'erburthen'd memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee: mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief:
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now

Bewilder'd by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
Should'st love me still,—thou only :—There,
Let us sit on that grey stone,
Till our mournful talk be done.

Helen. Alas ! not there ; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from thee, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow !
In the dell of yon dark chesnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,
We may sit here.

Rosalind. Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

Henry. 'Tis Fenici's seat
Where you are going ? This is not the way,
Mamma ; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

Helen. Yes : I know :
I was bewilder'd. Kiss me, and be gay,
Dear boy : why do you sob ?

Henry. I do not know :
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

Helen. It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home.
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.

We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now: Good night.

The boy
Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lighten'd o'er her face, laugh'd with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whisper'd in her ear, "Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend." Then off he flew,
But stopt, and beckon'd with a meaning smile,
Where the road turn'd. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,
Thro' which they took their way;
And the grey shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around
Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the column'd wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue.

Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness ;
And the birds that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and around him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high ;
The chirping of the grasshopper
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here :
Then, thro' the intricate wild wood,
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now :
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now :
The snake is in his cave asleep ;
The birds are on the branches dreaming
Only the shadows creep :
Only the glow-worm is gleaming :
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when day-light fails,
And grey shades gather in the woods :
And the owls have all fled far away
In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veil'd and sleeping now.
The accustom'd nightingale still broods
On her accustom'd bough,
But she is mute ; for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead,
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,

Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! The truth was worse;
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude;
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resign'd to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabb'd and trampled on its mother,
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls
Following. He was a gentle boy
And in all gentle sports took joy;
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm: and Helen smiled
Thro' tears of awe on the gay child,

To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued ;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.

For many months had Helen known
This scene ; and now she thither turn'd
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had mourn'd
Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate ; for evening,
And the power its glimpses bring,
Had, with one awful shadow, quell'd
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linked hands, for unrepell'd
Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair,
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre,
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat,
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to float and flow,
And from her labouring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prison'd flame,
The voice of a long pent sorrow came.

Rosalind. I saw the dark earth fall upon
The coffin ; and I saw the stone
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillow'd to his nightly rest !

Thou knowest not, thou can'st not know
My agony. Oh ! I could not weep :
The sources whence such blessings flow
Were not to be approach'd by me !
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watch'd—and would not thence depart—
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone,
But when I told them,—'he is dead,'—
They laugh'd aloud in frantic glee,
They clapp'd their hands and leap'd about ;
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout ;
But I sat silent and alone,
Wrapp'd in the mock of mourning weed.

They laugh'd, for he was dead : but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathed name !
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none ; a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile : his pale eyes ran
With tears, which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek :
He was a coward to the strong :
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak :

For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow
His soul to its home so cold and hollow.
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!
Oft, when my little ones at play,
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listen'd to some tale
Of travellers, or of fairy land,—
When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
Flash'd on their faces,—if they heard
Or thought they heard upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips: we all grew pale:
The babe at my bosom was hush'd with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cow'd, and cowering fearfully.

I'll tell thee truth: I loved another.
His name in my ear was ever ringing,
His form to my brain was ever clinging;
Yet if some stranger breathed that name,
My lips turn'd white, and my heart beat fast:
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame
My days were dim in the shadow cast,
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years, which soon were past,
On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,

And with a loud and fearful cry
Rush'd between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin grey hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words,—and live! Oh God!
Wherefore do I live?—'Hold, hold!'
He cried,—'I tell thee 'tis her brother!
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon church-yard rests in her shroud so cold:
I am now weak, and pale, and old:
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse! Thou art our child!'
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell:
They found him dead! All look'd on me,
The spasms of my despair to see:
But I was calm. I went away:
I was clammy-cold like clay!
I did not weep: I did not speak:
But day by day, week after week,
I walk'd about like a corpse alive!
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone: it did not break.

My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile!
When he was in the church-yard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread:
My mother look'd at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,

When weeks and months and years had past,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquish'd will,
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguish'd, like slow rain
Falling for ever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest ;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossest,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave,—that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make
My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vow'd task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair,—
When she was a thing that did not stir
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rock'd on its nurse's knee,
I lived · a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart that awaken'd me.
What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas ! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood : 'twas like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein ;
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away,
But laid in sleep, my wakeful pain,
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long, long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears :

But now—'twas the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May :
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bower'd round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears ran
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er :
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more !

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love and smiles ; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 'twere sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat
Rock it to its own untroubled rest,
And watch the growing soul beneath
Dawn in faint smiles ; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long departed memories !
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lighten'd. Darkly forward flow'd
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight :
Two other babes, delightful more
In my lost soul's abandon'd night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wreck'd mariners,
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears.

And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away
About my frozen heart, did play,
And wean'd it, oh how painfully !—
As they themselves were wean'd each one
From that sweet food,—even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast !
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she, who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed,
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring ;
But these fair shadows interposed :
For all delights are shadows now !
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow :
I cannot speak : Oh let me weep !

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmer'd among the moonlight dew :
Her deep hard sobs, and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale :

He died :
I know not how : he was not old,
If age be number'd by its years :
But he was bow'd and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak ;
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warp'd in spasms by hollow sneers ;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed

Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men own'd they were the same,

Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday :
At last, I told them what is death :
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,
And sate awe-stricken at my feet :
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave ;
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain. I dared not feign a groan ;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs ; and they
Express'd it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,
Now he is dead and gone away.

After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live
Still fear the living, but a corse
Is merciless, and power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,

Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child ! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers : let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days ;
'Tis Crime, and Fear, and Infamy,
And houseless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain,
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry for ever !
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported, that if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birth-place did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told.
They should inherit nought : and he,
To whom next came their patrimony,
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watch'd me as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony ;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvasing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call ;
For in that killing lie 'twas said—
" She is adulterous, and doth hold

In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need
That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire."
Friend, he was shelter'd by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false, as I
To those abhorr'd embraces doom'd.
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never question'd it;
I took it as the vulgar do:
Nor my vext soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
In feign'd or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride,
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously
Sate my two younger babes at play,
In the court-yard through which I past;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green.
And there, a woman with grey hairs,
Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old.

With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
I wander now. 'Tis a vain thought—
But on yon alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it o'er the flood of cloud,
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud,
From that grey stone where first we met)
There, now who knows the dead feel nought?
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul, once said: "'Twere sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds and lulling snows, that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
When weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close:
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure:
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?"
Then 'twas a wild and playful saying
At which I laugh'd, or seem'd to laugh;
They were his words; now heed my praying.
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt, and canst forgive
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdain'd not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught
And much less thee.

Helen. O speak not so,
But come to me and pour thy woe

Into this heart, full though it be,
Aye overflowing with its own;
I thought that grief had sever'd me
From all beside who weep and groan;
Its likeness upon earth to be,
Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet! we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear, since last we parted
All that has left me broken hearted?

Ros. Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night.

Helen. Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold—wintry cold—
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is gray and old.

Ros. Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

Helen. I fear 'twill shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more,
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly, but when he died
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dream'd the aged earth
Was labouring in that mighty birth,
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen—the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befel
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When liberty's dear pæan fell,
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,
Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flash'd on his visionary youth,
And fill'd him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth: in every other
First life then love its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet:
But he loved all things ever. Then
He past amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armed power
Pleading for a world of woe:
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of human kind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;

For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lull'd crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream,
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But is revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendour quiver.
His very gestures touch'd to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before: his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears,
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlock'd the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wonder'd, and some sneer'd to see
One sow what he could never reap:
For he is rich, they said, and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks fame, fame never crown'd
The champion of a trampled creed:
If he seeks power, power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil,
Those who would sit near power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.

That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn,

We understand ; but Lionel
We know is rich and nobly born.
So wonder'd they : yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved ;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey dew, which clings
Under the bright green buds of May,
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings :
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear,
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints and all such gear,
He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead.
So this grew a proverb : "don't get old
Till Lionel's 'banquet in hell' you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again."
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.
Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an alter'd time and tide,
And in its wasting wither'd him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,
When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Grey Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne ;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated,
Even to its blood-stain'd steps dragg'd on
Her foul and wounded train, and men
Were trampled and deceived again,
And words and shews again could bind

The wailing tribes of human kind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scorned instrument
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore :
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals.
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer ; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed,
And the same round anew began,
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears, but gall
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts, that claim
Men's care—ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair—
Indue the colours of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befel
To many, most to Lionel,
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and when dead, became
A spirit of unresting flame,
Which goaded him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,

And on the fourth, when he return'd
None knew him : he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turn'd
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him, on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a winged band
Of bright persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half outspread,
To do on men his least command ;
On him, whom once 'twas paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay ;
In his own heart 'twas merciless,
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

'Twas said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange shew : for there were found,
Blotted with tears as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do,
These mournful verses on the ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

" How am I changed ! my hopes were once like fire .
I loved, and I believed that life was love.
How am I lost ! on wings of swift desire
Among Heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
My liquid sleep : I woke, and did approve
All nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

" I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. O, from sleep

Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now : I wake to weep,
And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep,
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure,
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure."

He dwelt beside me near the sea :
And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,
And talk'd. Our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there pass'd
The desolation which it spoke ;
And smiles,—as when the lightning's blast
Has parch'd some heaven-delighting oak,
The next spring shews leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs—again array'd
His countenance in tender light :
His words grew subtile fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight :
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint :
And winged hope, on which upborne
His soul seem'd hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born
Floating amid the sunny skies,
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw,
Till like an exhalation, spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious : sweet

And subtile mists of sense and thought :
Which wrapt us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks and aught
The wide world holds. And so, his mind
Was heal'd, while mine grew sick with fear :
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an alter'd wind,
Though prosperous : and my heart grew full
'Mid its new joy of a new care :
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadow'd lilies are ;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat, not like animal life, but love
Seem'd now its sullen springs to move.
When life had fail'd, and all its pains :
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm, but that a tear,
His pointed eye-lashes between,
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles, whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame.
As eagerly it went and came ;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep :
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say with flattery false, yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.

And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided:
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shudder'd, and then laughing said—
"We will have rights our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind."

'Twas sunset as I spoke: one star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent,
Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chain'd limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves: a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage, nursed in hate?
What the knit soul, that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek, which late
It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I still'd the tingling of my blood,
And follow'd him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corse of her only child;
And when we came to the prison door,

And I pray'd to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurn'd,
And when men drove me forth and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,
A farewell look of love he turn'd,
Half calming me ; then gazed awhile,
As if thro' that black and massy pile,
And thro' the crowd around him there,
And thro' the dense and murky air,
And the throng'd streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophesy ;
And said, with voice that made them shiver
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again,
Prolonging it with deepen'd strain:
"Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith ;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death ;
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity."

I dwelt beside the prison gate,
And the strange crowd that out and in
Pass'd, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon, but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence :
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailor's arm,
Whose harden'd eyes grew moist the while,
To meet his mute and faded smile,
And hear his words of kind farewell,

He totter'd forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before,
From whom fast tears then gush'd and fell;
Many will relent no more,
Who sobb'd like infants then: aye, all
Who throng'd the prison's stony hall.
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison blood-hounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouch'd and fawn'd on him.
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept:
When like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free:
And Lionel sat alone with me,
As the carriage drove thro' the streets apace,
And we look'd upon each other's face:
And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Thro' the veins of each united frame.
So thro' the long long streets we past
Of the million-peopled City vast;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourn'd of none;

Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green ;
And then I sunk in his embrace,
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love : and so we travell'd on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar ;
And there were odours then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away,
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,
And light and sound ebb'd from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and weary sea
To the depths of its tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune :
Like flowers, which on each other close
Their languid leaves when day-light's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seem'd to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth,
Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky

Then slowly disunite, past by
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep: so we travell'd on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadow'd o'er.

The ancient steward, with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully:
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremaining gladness;
The truth flash'd o'er me like quick madness
When I look'd, and saw that there was death
On Lionel: yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away:
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is—O how beautiful!
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flash'd through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow:
And death seem'd not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Linger'd, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odours brought
From mountain flowers, even as it pass'd,
His cheek would change, as the noonday sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.

If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his colour come and go,
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade
Amid the dew of his tender eyes :
And the breath, with intermitting flow
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick, but not strong, and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelinesses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,
Alas ! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his, it seem'd already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me !
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it pass'd, till soon,
As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,
Is seen when it folds its grey wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain,
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Pass'd from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
On a green and sea-girt promontory,
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright

Circled by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured, " To Fidelity ;"
And in the shrine an image sate,
All veil'd : but there was seen the light
Of smiles, which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness
Through that ethereal drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right—
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within—
Was forcing the point of a barbed dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskill'd hand, yet one inform'd
With genius, had the marble warm'd
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told : A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragg'd Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand,
And she that temple thence had plann'd ;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,
The rites of a religion sweet,
Whose god was in her heart and brain :
The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet,
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white,
Whose odour is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
Woven in devices fine and quaint,
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar : need but look upon
That dying statue, fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again :

And rare Arabian odours came,
Though the myrtle copses steaming thence
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome,
That ivory dome, whose azure night,
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright
O'er the split cedars pointed flame;
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air
Softer than sleep: the villagers
Mix'd their religion up with her's,
And, as they listen'd round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane:
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering grey, and soon her strain
The nightingale began; now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
'Tis scatter'd in a thousand notes,
And now to the hush'd ear it floats
Like field smells known in infancy,
Then failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilion'd round with Parian stone:
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awaken'd music soft
Amid its wires: the nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale:
'Now drain the cup," said Lionel,
"Which the poet-bird has crown'd so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song!
Heardst thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heardst thou not that those who die

Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me."
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own: like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine
Fill'd me with the flame divine,
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star,
In the sky of midnight dark and deep:
Yes, 'twas his soul that did inspire
Sounds, which my skill could ne'er awaken;
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony:
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wander'd like quick flame,
And from my bosom, labouring
With some unutterable thing:
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble, in some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood
So pale, that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness: yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burn'd with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy, whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break

With beams that might not be confined.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted, and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life dissolving sound,
Yet faint : in aery rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly ;
And slowly now he turn'd to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy : with looks serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs : words, I dare not say
We mix'd, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold :
" What is it with thee, love ?" I said :
No word, no look, no motion ! yes,
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I look'd, and knew that he was dead,
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls, when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veil'd again.

Oh that I were now dead ! but such
Did they not, love, demand too much
Those dying murmurs ? He forbad,
Oh that I once again were mad !
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy, did I forget thee too ?

Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers,
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died,
And waked in a world, which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside;
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears;
And when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy
Brought in that hour my lovely boy;
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept;
And if I waked, or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me;
And thus, O Lionel, like thee
Is our sweet child. 'Tis sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change,
As that which gave him birth, who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready lies of law bereft,
My child and me might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn,
Which from the meanest I have borne,
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mix'd with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make :
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased—" Lo, where red morning thro' the woods
Is burning o'er the dew ;" said Rosalind,
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined :
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadow'd with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies,
And with their shadows the clear depths below,
And where a little terrace from its bowers
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon-flowers,
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake ;
And where the aged forest's limbs look hoar,
Under the leaves which their green garments make.
They come : 'tis Helen's home, and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude, its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 'twas scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things there were plann'd,
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturb'd poor Rosalind : she stood as one

Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, "Observe, that brow was Lionel's,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept
One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes, they are two wells
Of liquid love: let us not wake him yet."
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept
A shower of burning tears, which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth, changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
They wander'd in their youth, through sun and rain.
And after many years, for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind,
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene;
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became,
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.
And Rosalind, for when the living stem
Is canker'd in its heart, the tree must fall,
Died ere her time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors follow'd her remains
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call

Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice,
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
Whose polish'd sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk; and thro' the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheeled round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound
With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Fill'd the frore air with unaccustom'd light:
Such flowers, as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left, adorn'd that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, death slowlier led
Into the peace of his dominion cold:
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know, that if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blest, as now Helen and Rosalind.

LINES

WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS.

OCTOBER, 1818.

MANY a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track;
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,
Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'er-brimming deep;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun,

He is ever drifted on
O'er the unreposing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What, if there no friends will greet;
What, if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no:
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.
On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,
One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few grey rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughter'd town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp of fratricides:

Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony:
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted:
'Mid the mountains Euganean,
I stood listening to the pæan
With which the legion'd rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestical;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like grey shades, till th' eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Fleck'd with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starr'd with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Thro' the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair;

Underneath day's azure eyes
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin then than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,

Save where many a palace-gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandon'd sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep,
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aërial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourish'd worms
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murder'd and now mouldering:
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence, and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chain'd like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime;
If not, perish thou and they,
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away,
Earth can spare ye: while like flowers,

In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish! let there only be
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea,
As the garment of thy sky
Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tatter'd pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan;
That a tempest-cleaving swan
Of the songs of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung
O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror: what though yet
Poesy's unfailing river,
Which thro' Albion winds for ever,
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled!
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own,—oh, rather say,
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul!
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wastin springs;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power, which he

Imaged 'mid mortality;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
A quenchless lamp, by which the heart
Sees things unearthly; so thou art,
Mighty spirit: so shall be
The city that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-winged Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height;
From the sea a mist has spread,
And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that grey cloud
Many-domed Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain,
Heap'd upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest home:
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse; but 'tis a bitter woe

That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Play'd at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, "I win, I win!"
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
But Death promised, to assuage her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
When the destined years were o'er,
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian.
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,
And since that time, ay, long before,
Both have rul'd from shore to shore,
That incestuous pair, who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As Repentance follows Crime,
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning;
Like a meteor, whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betray'd and to betray:
Once remotest nations came
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth:
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might;
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by tyranny.

As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells,
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born :
The spark beneath his feet is dead.
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darken'd sky
With myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear : so thou,
O tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest
Grovel on the earth : ay, hide
In the dust thy purple pride !

Noon descends around me now :
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolved star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky ;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath, the leaves unsodden
Where the infant frost has trodden
With his morning-winged feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellis'd lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower

In the windless air; the flower
Glimmering at my feet; the line
Of the olive-sandall'd Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun;
And of living things each one;
And my spirit which so long
Darken'd this swift stream of song,
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky:
Be it love, light, hārmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs:
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like winged winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
'Mid remember'd agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being,)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of life and agony:
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf: even now, perhaps,

On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine.
We may live so happy there,
That the spirits of the air,
Envying us, may even entice
To our healing paradise
The polluting multitude ;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves ;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies,
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood :
They, not it would change ; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

HYMN TO INTELLECTUAL BEAUTY.

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats, tho' unseen, among us; visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,
Like memory of music fled,
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river;
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shewn;
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given:
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,

remain the records of their vain endeavour :
Frail spells, whose utter'd charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone, like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night wind sent
Thro' strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds, depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes ;
Thou, that to human thought are nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame !
Depart not as thy shadow came :
Depart not, lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Thro' many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I call'd on poisonous names with which our youth is fed :
I was not heard : I saw them not :
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me :
I shriek'd and clasp'd my hands in ecstasy !

I vow'd that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine : have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave : they have in vision'd bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatch'd with me the envious night :
They know that never joy illumed my brow,
Unlink'd with hope that thou would'st free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou, O awful LOVELINESS,
Would'st give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past : there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which thro' the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been !
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm, to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

SONNET.

OZYMANDIAS.

MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed :
And on the pedestal these words appear :
" My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

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PROMETHEUS UNBOUND

A LYRICAL DRAMA

IN FOUR ACTS

WITH OTHER POEMS

BY

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

AUDISNE HÆC, AMPHIARAE, SUB TERRAM ABDITE?

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PREFACE.

THE Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The "Prometheus Unbound" of Æschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter,

delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The

bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante, indeed, more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me), to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter

must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them:

one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest ; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others ; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers ; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art ; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness ; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope ; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, "a passion for reforming the world." What passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part, I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforce-

ment of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appears to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PROMETHEUS.
DEMOGORGON.
JUPITER.
THE EARTH.
OCEAN.
APOLLO.
MERCURY.
HERCULES.

ASIA. } Oceanides.
PANTHEA. }
IONE. }
THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
SPIRITS, ECHOES, FAWNS.
FURIES.

ACT I.

SCENE.—A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus. PROMETHEUS is discovered bound to the precipice. PANTHEA and IONE are seated at his feet.—Time, Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.

PRO. MONARCH of Gods and Demons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth,
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,

Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seem'd years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire.
More glorious far than that which thou survey'st
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deign'd to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nail'd to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.

And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-colour'd east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee,
If they disdain'd not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended thro' the wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breath'd on thee I would recall. Ye mountains,
Whose many-voiced Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering thro' India! Thou serenest Air,
Thro' which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poised wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hush'd abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbed world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

First Voice: From the Mountains.

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

Second Voice: From the springs.

Thunder-bolts had parch'd our water,
We had been stain'd with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Thro' a city and a solitude.

Third Voice: from the air.

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

Fourth Voice: from the whirlwinds.

We had soar'd beneath these mountains
Unresting ages: nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under,
Ever made us mute with wonder.

First Voice.

But never bow'd our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

Second Voice.

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leap'd up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

Third Voice.

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven:
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood

Fourth Voice.

And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is a hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, 'Misery!' then; the hollow Heaven replied,
'Misery!' And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howl'd to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!'

Pro. I hear a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanish'd, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh, rock-embosom'd lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Thro' whose o'ershadowing woods I wander'd once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who check'd,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

The Earth. They dare not.

Pro. Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles thro' the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice

I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

The Earth. How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

Pro. Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.

The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art, and good, and tho' the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

Pro. Obscurely thro' my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

The Earth. No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

Pro. And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice?

The Earth. I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale, until his thunder chain'd thee here.
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us: their inhabitants beheld
My sphered light wane in wide Heaven; the sea

Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
Lightning and Inundation vex'd the plains:
Blue thistles bloom'd in cities; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawl'd:
When Plague had fall'n on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree;
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teem'd ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stain'd
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; aye, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words
But dare not speak them.

Pro. Venerable mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

The Earth. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;

Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains ; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms ; heroes, men, and beasts ;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom ;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades, or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply : so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep thro' vacant shades,
As rainy wind thro' the abandon'd gate
Of a fallen palace.

Pro. Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear !

Ione. My wings are folded o'er mine ears :
My wings are crossed o'er mine eyes :
Yet thro' their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds ;
May it be no ill to thee,
O thou of many wounds :
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake.

Panthea. The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven ;
The shape is awful like the sound,

Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veined hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

Phantasm of Jupiter. Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direst storms? What unaccustom'd sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

Pro. Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

The Earth. Listen! And tho' your echoes must be mute,
Grey mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

Phan. A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

Pan. See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.

Ione. He speaks! O shelter me!

Pro. I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak: Oh, speak!

Phantasm. Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm fix'd mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.

Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legion'd forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Ay, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony,
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse·
'Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenom'd agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain,
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damn'd, beholding good;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally.

And after many a false and fruitless crime
Scorn track thy lagging fall thro' boundless space and time.

Pro. Were these my words, O, Parent?
The Earth. They were thine.
Pro. It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.
The Earth. Misery, Oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquished
First Echo. Lies fallen and vanquished!
Second Echo. Fallen and vanquished!
Ione. Fear not: 'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquish'd still.
But see, where thro' the azure chasm
Of yon fork'd and snowy hill
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandall'd feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.
Pan. 'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury
Ione. And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—
Pan. These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,

When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.
Ione. Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?
Pan. The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.
First Fury. Ha! I scent life!
Second Fury. Let me but look into his eyes!
Third Fury. The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses, to a death-bird after battle.
First Fury. Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer,
Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia soon
Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent?
Mer. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash beside the streams of fire and wail
Your foodless teeth. Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,
Chimæra, and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends,
Who minister'd to Thebes Heaven's poison'd wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.
First Fury. Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!
Mer. Crouch then in silence,
Awful Sufferer.
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, heaven seems hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly would'st stand forth alone in strife

Against the Omnipotent ; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
For which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so ! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things.
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme :
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession ; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart :
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

Pro. Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has ; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day : whether the Sun
Split my parch'd skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-winged snow cling round my hair :
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrants' recompense : 'tis just :
He who is evil can receive no good ;
And for a world bestow'd, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame ; not gratitude :
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try :

For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour: fear delay:
Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.

Mer. Oh, that we might be spared: I to inflict
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?

Pro. I know but this, that it must come.

Mer. Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?

Pro. They last while Jove must reign: nor more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.

Mer. Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless;
Perchance it has not number'd the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?

Pro. Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.

Mer. If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while
Lapp'd in voluptuous joy?

Pro. I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.
Mer. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.
Pro. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned: how vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.
Ione. O sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!
Mer. I must obey his words and thine: alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!
Pan. See where the child of Heaven, with winged feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.
Ione. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die: they come: they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.
First Fury. Prometheus!
Second Fury. Immortal Titan!
Third Fury. Champion of Heaven's slaves!
Pro. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chain'd Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul thro' monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.
First Fury. We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and, as lean dogs pursue
Thro' wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.

Pro. Oh! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathed selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

Second Fury. We knew not that: Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!

Pro. Can aught exult in its deformity?

Second Fury. The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aerial crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.

Pro. I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.

First Fury. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

Pro. Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.

Second Fury. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?

Pro. I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which call'd
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

Third Fury. Thou think'st we will live thro' thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and tho' we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men:
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonish'd heart,

And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony.

Pro. Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

Chorus of Furies.

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth.
Come, come, come!
Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;
Come, come, come!
Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strew'd beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred, as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning:
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning:
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel:
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted,
To the maniac dreamer; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
Is he with fear.
Come, come, come!
We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blasts of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

Ione. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

Pan. These solid mountains quiver with the sound

Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

First Fury. Your call was as a winged car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapt us from red gulfs of war.

Second Fury. From wide cities, famine-wasted;

Third Fury. Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

Fourth Fury. Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

Fifth Fury. From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A Fury. Speak not: whisper not:
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

Fury. Tear the veil!

Another Fury It is torn.

Chorus. The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Mark that outcry of despair!

'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled:
Look again, the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

Semichorus I. Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now:
See a disenchanted nation
Springs like day from desolation;
To truth its state is delicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legion'd band of linked brothers
Whom Love calls children—

Semichorus II. 'Tis another's:
See how kindred murder kin:
'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
'Till Despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the* FURIES *vanish, except one.*

Ione. Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppress'd is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

Pan. Alas! I look'd forth twice, but will no more

Ione. What didst thou see?

Pan. A woful sight: a youth
With patient looks nail'd to a crucifix.

Ione. What next?

Pan. The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appear'd the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly kill'd by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth: those groans are grief enough.

Fury. Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousand-fold torment on themselves and him.

Pro. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home;
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some link'd to corpses in unwholesome cells:
Some—Hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

Fury. Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

Pro. Worse?

Fury. In each human heart terror survives
The ruin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.

Pro. Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

Fury. Thou pitiest them? I speak no more!

[*Vanishes.*

Pro. Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumed mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

Pan. Alas! what sawest thou?

Pro. There are two woes;
To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watch-words, they
Were born aloft in bright emblazonry;

The nations throng'd around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear;
Tyrants rush'd in, and did divide the spoil.
This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

The Earth. I felt thy torture, son, with such mix'd joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding ether: they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!

Pan. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!

Ione. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scatter'd lines.
And hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?

Pan. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

Chorus of Spirits. From unremember'd ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppress'd mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought.
Be it dim, and dank, and grey,
Like a storm-extinguish'd day,
Travell'd o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;

As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float thro' all above the grave ;
We make these our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloud-like and unpent
Thro' the boundless element :
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee !

Ione. More yet come, one by one : the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

First Spirit. On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom ! Hope ! Death ! Victory !
Till they faded thro' the sky ;
And one sound, above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving ; 'twas the soul of love ;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

Second Spirit. A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rock'd beneath, immoveably ;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between with many a captive cloud
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half :
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh :
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death

O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

Third Spirit. I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a Dream with plumes of flame
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade, its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet:
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

Fourth Spirit. On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aerial kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!
One of these awaken'd me,
And I sped to succour thee.

Ione. Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west

Come, as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And, hark! their sweet, sad voices! 'tis despair
Mingled with love, and then dissolved in sound.

Panthea. Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drown'd.

Ione. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold:
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

Chorus of Spirits. Hast thou beheld the form of Love

Fifth Spirit. As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I pass'd 'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawn'd behind: great sages bound in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perish'd, unupbraiding,
Gleam'd in the night. I wander'd o'er, till thou, O King of sadness,
Turn'd by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

Sixth Spirit. Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with silent footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aërial joy, and call the monster, Love,

And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

Chorus. Tho' Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and winged steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest thro' the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

Pro. Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

Chorus. In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

Ione. Where are the Spirits fled?

Panthea. Only a sense
Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which thro' the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes thro' long caverns, wind and roll.

Pro. How fair these air-born shapes! and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflow'd,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.

All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Tho' I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

Pan. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

Pro. I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.

Pan. Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

End of the First Act.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus. ASIA alone.

ASIA. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended:
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,

Which should have learnt repose : thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests ; thou dost wake, O Spring !
O child of many winds ! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet ;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour ;
At sunrise, thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come !
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl !
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains : thro' a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it : now it wanes : it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air :
'Tis lost ! and thro' yon peaks of cloudlike snow
The roseate sun-light quivers : hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn ?

PANTHEA *enters.*

I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn thro' smiles that fade in tears
Like stars half quench'd in mists of silver dew.
Beloved and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art ! the sphered sun had climb'd
The sea ; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.

Pan. Pardon, great Sister ! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remember'd dream,

As are the noon-tide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refresh'd and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, thro' use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept,
Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean,
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Lock'd then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were press'd within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

Asia. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.

Pan. As I have said
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
From the keen ice shielding our linked sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other, his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
"Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
"With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,

"Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me."
I lifted them: the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadow'd o'er
By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steam'd forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
Which wrapt me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm ether of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorb'd, until it past,
And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gather'd, I could hear
His voice, whose accents linger'd ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; tho' still
I listen'd through the night when sound was none
Ione waken'd then, and said to me:
"Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
"I always knew what I desired before,
"Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
"But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
"I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
"Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
"Thou hast discover'd some enchantment old,
"Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
"And mingled it with thine: for when just now
"We kiss'd, I felt within thy parted lips
"The sweet air that sustain'd me, and the warmth

"Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
"Quiver'd between our intertwining arms."
I answer'd not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not. Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!

Pan. I lift them tho' they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line thro' line inwoven.

Pan. Why lookest thou as if a spirit past?

Asia. There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, array'd
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded morn.
Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build on the waste world? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air
For thro' its grey robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quench'd not.

Dream. Follow! Follow!

Pan. It is mine other dream.

Asia. It disappears.

Pan. It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sat here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,

When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost :
I look'd, and all the blossoms were blown down ;
But on each leaf was stamp'd, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

Asia. As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among the lawns together
We wander'd, underneath the young grey dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind ;
And the white dew on the new bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently ;
And there was more which I remember not :
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW ! As they vanish'd by,
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamp'd, as with a withering fire,
A wind arose among the pines ; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard : OH, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME !
And then I said : "Panthea, look on me."
But in the depth of those beloved eyes
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW !

Echo. Follow, follow !

Pan. The crags, this clear spring morning mock our voices
As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds ! O, list !

ECHOES, *unseen.* Echoes we : listen !
We cannot stay :
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean !

Asia. Hark ! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
Of their aërial tongues yet sound.

Pan. I hear.

Echoes. O, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Thro' the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth ;

(More distant) O, follow, follow !
Thro' the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Thro' the noon-tide darkness deep,
By the odour-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves,
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean !

Asia. Shall we pursue the sound ? It grows more faint
And distant.

Pan. List ! the strain floats nearer now.

Echoes. In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken ;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken ;
Child of Ocean !

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind !

Echoes. O, follow, follow !
Thro' the caverns hollow,

As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noon-tide dew;
By the forests, lakes, and fountains,
Thro' the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now;
Child of Ocean!

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.

A Forest, intermingled with rocks and caverns. ASIA and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock, listening.

Semichorus I. of Spirits.

THE path thro' which that lovely twain
Have past, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtain'd out from Heaven's wide blue;
Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone:
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders thro' steep night,
Has found the cleft thro' which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon

Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite :
And the gloom divine is all around ;
And underneath is the mossy ground.
Semichorus II. There the voluptuous nightingales,
Are awake thro' all the broad noon-day,
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
And thro' the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom ;
Another from the swinging blossom,
Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
The wings of the weak melody,
Till some new strain of feeling bear
The song, and all the woods are mute ;
When there is heard thro' the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
Like many a lake-surrounding flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.
Semichorus I. There those enchanted eddies play
Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
By Demogorgon's mighty law,
With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way ;
As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw :
And first there comes a gentle sound
To those in talk or slumber bound,
And wakes the destined soft emotion,
Attracts, impels them : those who saw
Say from the breathing earth behind

There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey:
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
Suck'd up and hurrying as they fleet
Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, tho' we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell:
I have heard those more skill'd in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noon-tide kindles thro' the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors thro' the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,

Or on their dying odours, when they die,
Or on the sunlight of the sphered dew?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well divine.

But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sign those wise and lovely songs
Of fate, and chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chain'd Titan's woful dooms,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer
Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.

A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.
ASIA and PANTHEA.

PAN. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapour is hurl'd up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift,
Like Mænads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
The voice which is contagion to the world.

Asia. Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Tho' evil stain its work, and it should be,
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee

Even now my heart adoreth : Wonderful !
Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain :
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumined caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist ;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scatter'd up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark ! the rushing snow !
The sun awaken'd avalanche ! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gather'd there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosen'd, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

Pan. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet ! it rises
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wreck'd on some oozy isle.

Asia. The fragments of the cloud are scatter'd up ;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair ;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes ; my brain
Grows dizzy ; I see thin shapes within the mist.

Pan. A countenance with beckoning smiles : there burns

An azure fire within its golden locks !
Another and another : hark ! they speak !

Song of Spirits. To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down !
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life ;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down !

While the sound whirls around,
Down, down !
As the fawn draws the hound,
As the lightning the vapour,
As a weak moth the taper ;
Death, despair ; love, sorrow ;
Time both ; to-day, to-morrow ;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down.

Through the grey, void abysm,
Down, down !
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is one pervading, one alone,
Down, down !

In the depth of the deep
Down, down !
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,
The last look Love remembers,

Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!
With the bright form beside thee;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coil'd underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV.

The Cave of DEMOGORGON. ASIA and PANTHEA.

PAN. What veiled form sits on that ebon throne?
Asia. The veil has fallen.
Pan. I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.
Dem. Ask what thou wouldst know.
Asia. What canst thou tell?
Dem. All things thou darest demand.
Asia. Who made the living world?
Dem. God.
Asia. Who made all.
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?
Dem. God: Almighty God.

Asia. Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?

Dem. Merciful God.

Asia. And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things,
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandon'd hope, and love that turns hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

Dem. He reigns.

Asia. Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.

Dem. He reigns.

Asia. I feel, I know it: who?

Dem. He reigns.

Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has wither'd them
And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought

Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love ;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, ' Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law ; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign ;
And Jove now reign'd ; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell ; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves .
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent.
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legion'd hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death ; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart ;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, play'd beneath
The frown of man ; and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the universe ;
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not ; and the harmonious mind

Pour'd itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walk'd, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimick'd and then mock'd,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transform'd, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flow'd
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who reigns down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandon'd, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook heaven, ay when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Dem. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.
Asia. Whom called'st thou God?
Dem. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.
Asia. Who is the master of the slave?
Dem. If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.
Asia. So much I ask'd before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?
Dem. Behold!
Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasp'd it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

Dem. These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.
Asia. A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak
Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.
Asia. What meanest thou?
Pan. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruin'd cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars,
Blackening the night!
Asia. Thus I am answer'd: strange!
Pan. See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope;
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures winged insects thro' the lampless air.
Spirit. My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is brightening
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.
I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:

We shall rest from long labours at noon :
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.

The Car pauses within a cloud on the top of a snowy mountain. ASIA, PANTHEA, and the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT. On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire ;
But the Earth has just whisper'd a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire :
They shall drink the hot speed of desire !

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.
Spirit. Alas ! it could not.
Pan. Oh Spirit ! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud ? the sun is yet unrisen.
Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder ; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aërial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.
Pan. Yes, I feel—
Asia. What is it with thee, sister ? Thou art pale.
Pan. How thou art changed ! I dare not look on thee ;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveil'd. The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veined shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,

Among the Egean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hear'st thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feel'st thou not
The inanimate winds enamour'd of thee? List!

[*Music.*]

Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or return'd. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

Pan. List! Spirits speak.

Voice in the air, singing.

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy lips are burning
Thro' the vest which seems to hide them;

As the radiant hues of morning
Thro' the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

Asia. My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside the helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:
Meanwhile the spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven

And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have pass'd Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously!

End of the Second Act.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Heaven. JUPITER on his Throne; THETIS and the other Deities assembled.

JUP. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,

Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like an unextinguish'd fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear;
And, tho' my curses thro' the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; tho' under my wrath's might
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandall'd feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepress'd, yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the distant hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.

Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
Drink! be the nectar circling thro' your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.
And thou
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,

Thetis, bright image of eternity!
When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might!
"God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
"The penetrating presence; all my being,
"Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw
"Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
"Sinking thro' its foundations;" even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding the winds?) Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[The Car of the HOUR arrives. DEMOGORGON descends, and moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.]

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!
Dem. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or re-assume, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.
Jup. Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! thou lingerest?
Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,

That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, sear'd by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!
Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wild waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquer'd, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.
Ai! Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.

The mouth of a great river in the island Atlantis. OCEAN is discovered reclining near the shore; APOLLO stands beside him.

OCEAN. He fell, thou sayst, beneath his conqueror's frown?

Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,

Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.
Ocean. He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?
Apollo. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aërial ice clings over it.
Ocean. Henceforth the fields of Heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstain'd with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Sway'd by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating bark of the light laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice
Of slavery and command; but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
That sweetest music, such as spirits love.
Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits on the morning star.
Ocean. Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell:
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it

With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.
(*A sound of waves is heard.*)
It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.

Apollo. Farewell.

SCENE II.

Caucasus. PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, the EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, and PANTHEA, borne in the car with the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

HERCULES unbinds PROMETHEUS, who descends.

HERCULES. Most glorious among spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.

Pro. Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delay'd.
Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld; and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, thro' your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veined emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.

From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shall chaunt fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and, like lutes
Touch'd by the skill of the enamour'd wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmed winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aërial Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmur'd pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions, dim at first.

Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty, whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms, casts on them
The gather'd rays which are reality,
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and wrapt Poesy,
And arts, tho' unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship love, by him and us
Given and return'd; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And veil by veil, evil and error fall:
Such virtue has the cave and place around.
(*Turning to the Spirit of the Hour.*
For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curved shell, which Proteus old
Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplish'd, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell;
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
Looks it not like lull'd music sleeping there?

Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.

Pro. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbed world;
And, as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
Return, and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.

And thou, O, Mother Earth !—

The Earth. I hear, I feel ;
Thy lips are on me, and thy touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves ; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And thro' my wither'd, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms ; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-wing'd,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment ; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm : night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwitting hues in their repose :
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy :
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, " Leave me not again."

Asia. Oh, mother ! wherefore speak the name of death ?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die ?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply :
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life :
They sleep, and it is lifted : and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,

And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war,
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linked ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of colour'd light,
As they rain thro' them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
And thro' their veined leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
Stand ever mantling with aërial dew,
The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!

[*A Spirit rises in the likeness of a winged child.*

This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing

On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,
The image of a temple, built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous most with living imagery,
Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hush'd air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honour thro' the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV.

A Forest. In the background a Cave. PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, and the SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE. Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,

The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass!
Knowest thou it?

Pan. It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth thro' heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks thro' fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or thro' the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reign'd
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reason'd what it saw; and call'd her,
From whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I,
Mother, dear mother.

The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia).
Mother, dearest mother;
May I then talk with thee as I was wont?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied; speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
And happier too; happier and wiser both.

Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Tho' fair, even in a world where thou art fair
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee,)
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, tho' they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay thro' a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leapt suddenly
Out of their rest, and gather'd in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music peal'd along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Pass'd floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scatter'd them; and those
From whom they pass'd seem'd mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fall'n, and all

Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again : and when the dawn
Came, would'st thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue :
All things had put their evil nature off :
I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with night-shade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky ;
So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister,
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon,
Will look on the more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What ; as Asia loves Prometheus ?

Asia. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With sphered fires the interlunar air ?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

Asia. Listen ; look !

The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.

Pro. We feel what thou hast heard and seen : yet speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder fill'd
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change : the impalpable thin air

And the all-circling sunlight were transform'd,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the sphered world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe :
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birth-place in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire.
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel ;
In memory of the tidings it has borne ;
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbenic snake,
The likeness of those winged steeds will mock
The light from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wander'd now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear ?
As I have said I floated to the earth :
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be ; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Express'd in outward things : but soon I look'd,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walk'd
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawn'd, none trampled ; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,

" All hope abandon ye who enter here ;"
None frown'd, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurr'd him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdain'd to speak ;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remain'd
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;
None talk'd that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, pass'd ; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they fear'd to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.
Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons ; wherein,
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reason'd wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghost of a no more remember'd fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs

Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round
Those imaged to the pride of kings and priests,
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment ; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorr'd by god and man,
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragg'd to his altars soil'd and garlandless,
And slain among men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they fear'd, which fear was hate,
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandon'd shrines :
The painted veil, by those who were, call'd life,
Which mimick'd, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside ;
The loathsome mask has fall'n, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclass'd, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself ; just, gentle, wise : but man
Passionless ; no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffer'd them,
Nor yet exempt, tho' ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

End of the Third Act.

ACT IV.

SCENE, a part of the forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping; they awake gradually during the first Song.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

THE pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastens, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly, singing.

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancell'd year!
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,

From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

Ione. What dark forms were they?
Pan. The past Hours, weak and grey,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.
Ione. Have they pass'd?
Pan. They have pass'd;
They outspeeded the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled:
Ione. Whither, oh, whither?
Pan. To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gather'd and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine-boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

Ione. What charioteers are these?
Pan. Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of Hours.

The voices of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
Which cover'd our being and darken'd our birth
In the deep.

A Voice. In the deep?
Semichorus II. Oh, below the deep.
Semichorus I. An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
Found the truth—
Semichorus II. Worse than his visions were!
Semichorus I. We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams,
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—
Semichorus II. As the billows leap in the morning beams!

Chorus. Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limp'd and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A Voice. Unite!

Pan. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapt in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.
Chorus of Spirits. We join the throng,
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along;
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.
Chorus of Hours. Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veiled not?
Chorus of Spirits. We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind;
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crown'd powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roof'd over Sculpture and Poesy;

From the murmurings
Of the unseal'd springs
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few,
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandall'd with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a reign of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of Spirits and Hours.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,
Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves and a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

Chorus of Spirits. Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize.

Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in the fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be call'd the Promethean.

Chorus of Hours. Break the dance, and scatter the song·
Let some depart, and some remain.

Semichorus I. We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

Semichorus II. Us the enchantments of earth retain:

Semichorus I. Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

Semichorus II. Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Semichorus I. We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

Semichorus II. We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of Hours and Spirits.

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like star-beams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Pan. Ha! they are gone!

Ione. Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?

Pan. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilion'd sky!

Ione. Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?

Pan. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air,
Æolian modulations.

Ione. Listen too,
How every pause is fill'd with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air,
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Pan. But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,

Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet,
Under the ground and through the windless air.
Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the mother of the months is borne
By ebbing night into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams,
O'er which is curved an orb-like canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods
Distinctly seen through that dusk airy veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunder-storm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll,
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a winged infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scatter'd in string; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is pour'd
From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moon-beam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheeled clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.
Pan. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,

Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one aërial mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillow'd upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

Pan. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,

Vast beams like spoke of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
Infinite mine of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns pour'd
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathom'd fire, and water-springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancell'd cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turn'd to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laugh'd, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes, and fanes: prodigious shapes
Huddled in grey annihilation, split,
Jamm'd in the hard, black deep; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown winged things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale,
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crush'd the iron crags; and over these

The jagged alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandon'd corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapt deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yell'd, gasp'd, and were abolish'd; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, pass'd, and cried,
Be not! And like my words they were no more.

The Earth. The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon. Brother mine, calm wanderer.
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odour, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

The Earth. Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatened'st to muffle round with black destruction, sending

A solid cloud to rain hot thunder-stones,
And splinter and knead down my children's bones
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending.

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crown'd with cloud, and snow, and fire.
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamp'd by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire.

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, cover'd, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drain'd by a desert-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Bursts in like light on caves cloven by thunder-ball.

The Moon. The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosen'd into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move:
Music is in the sea and air,
Winged clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

The Earth. It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass,

Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquish'd shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love ;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even
Darting from starry depths radiance and light, doth move.

Leave man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is pour'd ;
Then, when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men ! a chain of linked thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress ;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,

Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-winged ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear:
Language is a perpetual orphic song,
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are number'd, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

The Moon. The shadow of white death has past
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

The Earth. As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half infrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a winged mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the noon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

The Moon. Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine !

The Earth. I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
As a youth lull'd in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

The Moon. As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Cover'd ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one ;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given ;

I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like of lovers' eyes ;
I, a most enamour'd maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Shelter'd by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a cameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a grey and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst,
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow.

The Earth. And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.*

* At the close of that transcendent interlude of antiphonal music in the fourth act, the Earth takes up and gives back the last notes of

Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

Pan. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.
Ione. Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebb'd away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.
Pan. Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is shower'd like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gather'd up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.
Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.
Pan. An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

Dem. Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,

---

the Moon's chant before resuming a graver and deeper strain. Mr. Rossetti adds these two last short lines to the song of the Moon, and makes the Earth's part begin at the words, "O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight," &c.: to me there has always seemed to be a sweet and subtle miracle of music in the text as it stands. — [*Note by Algernon Swinburne.*]

Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:
The Earth. I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.
Dem. Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:
The Moon. I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!
Dem. Ye kings of suns and stars, Demons and Gods,
Ethereal Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A Voice from above.

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.
Dem. Ye happy dead, whom beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colours to pourtray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffer'd—
A Voice from beneath. Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.
Dem. Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from Heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A confused Voice.

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.
Dem. Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes
A Voice. Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Dem. Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:
All. Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.
Dem. This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragg'd captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to re-assume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

THE SENSITIVE PLANT.

PART FIRST.

A SENSITIVE Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it open'd its fan-like leaves to the light,
And closed them beneath the kisses of night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere ;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noon-tide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snow-drop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mix'd with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness ;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green ;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense ;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,
Which unveil'd the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare :

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-colour'd cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky ;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows ;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was prank'd under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmer'd by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowerets which drooping as day droop'd too
Fell into pavilions, white, purple and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapp'd and fill'd by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver,

For the sensitive plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumed insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass ;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears ;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which, like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream ;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the sensitive plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from heaven above,
And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, tho' less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were drown'd
In an ocean of dreams without a sound ;
Whose waves never mark, tho' they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness ;

(Only over head the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mix'd with the dreams of the sensitive plant.)

The sensitive plant was the earliest
Up-gather'd into the bosom of rest ;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of night.

PART SECOND.

THERE was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling grace
Which to the flowers did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when night walks forth,
Laugh'd round her footsteps up from the Earth!

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her trémulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the moon kiss'd the sleep from her eyes
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise:

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Tho' the veil of daylight conceal'd him from her.

Her step seem'd to pity the grass it prest;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her airy footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;

I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers, thro' all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam ;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustain'd them with rods and ozier bands ;
If the flowers had been her own infants she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,

In a basket, of grasses and wild flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banish'd insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss
The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
All the sweet season of summer tide,
And ere the first leaf look'd brown—she died !

PART THIRD.

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awaken'd, were,
Or the waves of Baiæ, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners deep and low ;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin plank ;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass ;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift summer into the autumn flow'd,
And frost in the midst of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun look'd clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf after leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and grey, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind pass'd ;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the winged seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set ;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks,
Were bent and tangled across the walks ;
And the leafless net-work of parasite bowers
Mass'd into ruin ; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow,
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splash'd with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

The thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretch'd out its long and hollow shank,
And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Fill'd the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starr'd with a lurid dew.

And agarics and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!

Their moss rotted off them, flake by flake,
Till the thick stalk stuck like a murderer's stake,
Where rags of loose flesh yet tremble on high,
Infecting the winds that wander by.

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Damm'd it up with roots knotted like water stakes

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill:
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noon-day
Unseen; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burn'd and bit.

The Sensitive Plant like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves which together grew
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came: the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clank'd at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound ;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost !

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want :
The birds dropp'd stiff from the frozen air,
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again,
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew ;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy and stiff,
And snapp'd them off with his rigid griff.

When winter had gone and spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck ;
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruin'd charnels.

CONCLUSION.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a spirit sat
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this charge, I cannot say.

Whether that lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scatter'd love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess; but in this life
Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never pass'd away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change: their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

A VISION OF THE SEA.

IS the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail
Are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale:
From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven,
And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from heaven,
She sees the black trunks of the water-spouts spin,
And bend, as if heaven was raining in,
Which they seem'd to sustain with their terrible mass
As if ocean had sank from beneath them: they pass

To their graves in the deep with an earthquake of sound.
And the waves and the thunders made silent around
Leave the wind to its echo. The vessel, now toss'd
Through the low-trailing rack of the tempest, is lost
In the skirts of the thunder-cloud : now down the sweep
Of the wind-cloven wave to the chasm of the deep
It sinks, and the walls of the watery vale
Whose depths of dread calm are unmoved by the gale,
Dim mirrors of ruin hang gleaming about ;
While the surf, like a chaos of stars, like a rout
Of death-flames, like whirlpools of fire-flowing iron
With splendour and terror the black ship environ,
Or like sulphur-flakes hurl'd from a mine of pale fire
In fountains spout o'er it. In many a spire
The pyramid-billows with white points of brine
In the cope of the lightning inconstantly shine,
As piercing the sky from the floor of the sea.
The great ship seems splitting ! it cracks as a tree,
While an earthquake is splintering its root, ere the blast
Of the whirlwind that stripp'd it of branches has past.
The intense thunder-balls which are raining from heaven
Have shatter'd its mast, and it stands black and riven.
The chinks suck destruction. The heavy dead hulk
On the living sea rolls an inanimate bulk,
Like a corpse on the clay which is hungering to fold
Its corruption around it. Meanwhile, from the hold,
One deck is burst up from the waters below,
And it splits like the ice when the thaw-breezes blow
O'er the lakes of the desert ! Who sit on the other ?
Is that all the crew that lie burying each other,
Like the dead in a breach, round the foremast ? Are those
Twin tigers, who burst, when the waters arose,
In the agony of terror, their chains in the hold ;
(What now makes them tame, is what then made them
bold ;)

Who crouch, side by side, and have driven, like a crank.
The deep grip of their claws through the vibrating plank.
Are these all? Nine wecks the tall vessel had lain
On the windless expanse of the watery plain,
Where the death-darting sun cast no shadow at noon,
And there seem'd to be fire in the beams of the moon,
Till a lead-colour'd fog gather'd up from the deep
Whose breath was quick pestilence; then, the cold sleep
Crept, like blight through the ears of a thick field of corn,
O'er the populous vessel. And even and morn,
With their hammocks for coffins the seamen aghast
Like dead men the dead limbs of their comrades cast
Down the deep, which closed on them above and around,
And the sharks and the dog-fish their grave-clothes unbound,
And were glutted like Jews with this manna rain'd down
From God on their wilderness. One after one
The mariners died; on the eve of this day,
When the tempest was gathering in cloudy array,
But seven remain'd. Six the thunder has smitten,
And they lie black as mummies on which Time has written
His scorn of the embalmer; the seventh, from the deck
An oak-splinter pierced through his breast and his back,
And hung out to the tempest, a wreck on the wreck.
No more? At the helm sits a woman more fair
Than heaven, when, unbinding its star-braided hair,
It sinks with the sun on the earth and the sea.
She clasps a bright child on her upgather'd knee,
It laughs at the lightning, it mocks the mix'd thunder
Of the air and the sea, with desire and with wonder
It is beckoning the tigers to rise and come near,
It would play with those eyes where the radiance of fear
Is outshining the meteors: its bosom beats high,
The heart-fire of pleasure has kindled its eye;
Whilst its mother's is lustreless. "Smile not, my child,

" But sleep deeply and sweetly, and so be beguiled
" Of the pang that awaits us, whatever that be,
" So dreadful since thou must divide it with me !
" Dream, sleep ! This pale bosom, thy cradle and bed,
" Will it rock thee not, infant ? 'Tis beating with dread !
" Alas ! what is life, what is death, what are we,
" That when the ship sinks we no longer may be ?
" What ! to see thee no more, and to feel thee no more ?
" To be after life what we have been before ?
" Not to touch those sweet hands ? Not to look on those
eyes,
" Those lips, and that hair, all that smiling disguise
" Thou yet wearest, sweet spirit, which I, day by day,
" Have so long call'd my child, but which now fades away
" Like a rainbow, and I the fall'n shower ?" Lo ! the ship
Is settling, it topples, the leeward ports dip ;
The tigers leap up when they feel the slow brine
Crawling inch by inch on them, hair, ears, limbs, and
eyne,
Stand rigid with horror ; a loud, long, hoarse cry
Bursts at once from their vitals tremendously,
And 'tis borne down the mountainous vale of the wave,
Rebounding, like thunder, from crag to cave,
Mix'd with the clash of the lashing rain,
Hurried on by the might of the hurricane :
The hurricane came from the west, and past on
By the path of the gate of the eastern sun,
Transversely dividing the stream of the storm ;
As an arrowy serpent, pursuing the form
Of an elephant, bursts through the brakes of the waste.
Black as a cormorant the screaming blast,
Between ocean and heaven, like an ocean, past,
Till it came to the clouds on the verge of the world
Which, based on the sea and to heaven upcurl'd,
Like columns and worlds did surround and sustain

The dome of the tempest ; it rent them in twain,
As a flood rends its barriers of mountainous crag :
And the dense clouds in many a ruin and rag,
Like the stones of a temple ere earthquake has past,
Like the dust of its fall, on the whirlwind are cast ;
They are scatter'd like foam on the torrent ; and where
The wind has burst out from the chasm, from the air
Of clear morning, the beams of the sunrise flow in,
Unimpeded, keen, golden, and crystalline,
Banded armies of light and of air ; at one gate
They encounter, but interpenetrate.
And the breach in the tempest is widening away,
And the caverns of clouds are torn up by the day,
And the fierce winds are sinking with weary wings
Lull'd by the motion and murmurings,
And the long glassy heave of the rocking sea,
And overhead glorious, but dreadful to see
The wrecks of the tempest, like vapours of gold,
Are consuming in sunrise. The heap'd waves behold
The deep calm of blue heaven dilating above,
And, like passions made still by the presence of Love,
Beneath the clear surface reflecting it slide
Tremulous with soft influence ; extending its tide
From the Andes to Atlas, round mountain and isle,
Round sea-birds and wrecks, paved with heaven's azure
smile.
The wide world of waters is vibrating. Where
Is the ship ? On the verge of the wave where it lay
One tiger is mingled in ghastly affray
With a sea-snake. The foam and the smoke of the battle
Stain the clear air with sunbows ; the jar, and the rattle
Of solid bones crush'd by the infinite stress
Of the snake's adamantine voluminousness ;
And the hum of the hot blood that spouts and rains
Where the gripe of the tiger has wounded the veins,

Swoln with rage, strength, and effort; the whirl and the splash
As of some hideous engine whose brazen teeth smash
The thin winds and soft waves into thunder; the screams
And hissings crawl fast o'er the smooth ocean streams,
Each sound like a centipede. Near this commotion,
A blue shark is hanging within the blue ocean,
The fin-winged tomb of the victor. The other
Is winning his way from the fate of his brother,
To his own with the speed of despair. Lo! a boat
Advances; twelve rowers with the impulse of thought
Urge on the keen keel, the brine foams. At the stern
Three marksmen stand levelling. Hot bullets burn
In the breast of the tiger, which yet bears him on
To his refuge and ruin. One fragment alone,
'Tis dwindling and sinking, 'tis now almost gone,
Of the wreck of the vessel peers out of the sea.
With her left hand she grasps it impetuously,
With her right she sustains her fair infant. Death, Fear.
Love, Beauty, are mix'd in the atmosphere;
Which trembles and burns with the fervour of dread
Around her wild eyes, her bright hand, and her head,
Like a meteor of light o'er the waters! her child
Is yet smiling, and playing, and murmuring; so smiled
The false deep ere the storm. Like a sister and brother
The child and the ocean still smile on each other,
Whilst———

ODE TO HEAVEN.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS.

FIRST SPIRIT.

PALACE-ROOF of cloudless nights !
Paradise of golden lights !
Deep, immeasurable, vast,
Which art now, and which wert then !
Of the present and the past,
Of the eternal where and when,
Presence-chamber, temple, home,
Ever-canopying dome,
Of acts and ages yet to come !

Glorious shapes have life in thee,
Earth, and all earth's company ;
Living globes which ever throng
Thy deep chasms and wildernesses ;
And green worlds that glide along ;
And swift stars with flashing tresses ;
And icy moons most cold and bright,
And mighty suns beyond the night,
Atoms of intensest light.

Even thy name is as a god,
Heaven ! for thou art the abode
Of that power which is the glass
Wherein man his nature sees.
Generations as they pass
Worship thee with bended knees.
Their unremaining gods and they
Like a river roll away :
Thou remainest such alway.

SECOND SPIRIT.

Thou art but the mind's first chamber,
Round which its young fancies clamber,
  Like weak insects in a cave,
Lighted up by stalactites ;
  But the portal of the grave,
Where a world of new delights
  Will make thy best glories seem
  But a dim and noonday gleam
  From the shadow of a dream !

THIRD SPIRIT.

Peace ! the abyss is wreathed with scorn
At your presumption, atom-born !
  What is heaven? and what are ye
Who its brief expanse inherit ?
What are suns and spheres which flee
With the instinct of that spirit
  Of which ye are but a part?
  Drops which Nature's mighty heart
  Drives through thinnest veins. Depart !

What is heaven? a globe of dew,
Filling in the morning new
  Some eyed flower whose young leaves waken
On an unimagined world :
  Constellated suns unshaken,
Orbits measureless, are furl'd
  In that frail and fading sphere,
  With ten millions gather'd there,
  To tremble, gleam, and disappear.

AN EXHORTATION.

CAMELEONS feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light cameleons do,
Suiting it to every ray
Twenty times a-day?

Poets are on this cold earth,
As cameleons might be,
Hidden from their early birth
In a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is cameleons change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either never think it strange
That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
A poet's free and heavenly mind:
If bright cameleons should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Spirits from beyond the moon,
O, refuse the boon!

ODE TO THE WEST WIND.*

I.

WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes : O, thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill :

Wild Spirit, which art moving every where ;
Destroyer and preserver ; hear, O, hear !

II.

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

* This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.

The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it.

Angels of rain and lightning : there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst : O, hear !

III.

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves : O, hear !

IV.

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O, uncontrollable ! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision ; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed !

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee : tameless, and swift, and proud.

v.

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is :
What if my leaves are falling like its own !
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, spirit fierce,
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth !
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind !
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy ! O, wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind ?

AN ODE.

[WRITTEN, OCTOBER, 1819, BEFORE THE SPANIARDS HAD RECOVERED THEIR LIBERTY.]

ARISE, arise, arise !
There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread ;
Be your wounds like eyes
To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead.
What other grief were it just to pay ?
Your sons, your wives, your brethren, were they ;
Who said they were slain on the battle day ?

Awaken, awaken, awaken !
The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes ;
Be the cold chains shaken
To the dust where your kindred repose, repose :
Their bones in the grave will start and move,
When they hear the voices of those they love,
Most loud in the holy combat above.

Wave, wave high the banner !
When freedom is riding to conquest by :
Though the slaves that fan her
Be famine and toil, giving sigh for sigh.
And ye who attend her imperial car,
Lift not your hands in the banded war,
But in her defence whose children ye are.

Glory, glory, glory,
To those who have greatly suffer'd and done !
Never name in story
Was greater than that which ye shall have won.
Conquerors have conquer'd their foes alone,
Whose revenge, pride and power they have overthrown
Ride ye, more victorious, over your own.

Bind, bind every brow
With crownals of violet, ivy, and pine :
Hide the blood-stains now
With hues which sweet nature has made divine :
Green strength, azure hope, and eternity :
But let not the pansy among them be ;
Ye were injured, and that means memory.

THE CLOUD.

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers
From the seas and the streams ;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noon-day dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet birds every one,
When rock'd to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast ;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits,
In a cavern under is fetter'd the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits ;
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea ;

Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead.
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbed maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanos are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chain'd to my chair,
Is the million-colour'd bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams.
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

TO A SKYLARK.

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven,
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflow'd.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymenæal,
Or triumphant chaunt,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
We pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

ODE TO LIBERTY.

Yet, Freedom, yet thy banner torn but flying,
Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.
BYRON.

I.

GLORIOUS people vibrated again
The lightning of the nations: Liberty
From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,
Scattering contagious fire into the sky,
Gleam'd. My soul spurn'd the chains of its dismay,
And, in the rapid plumes of song,
Clothed itself, sublime and strong;
As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,
Hovering in verse* o'er its accustom'd prey;
Till from its station in the heaven of fame
The Spirit's whirlwind rapt it, and the ray
Of the remotest sphere of living flame
Which paves the void was from behind it flung,

* Mr. Rossetti suggests "inverse" as the true reading.

As foam from a ship's swiftness, when there came
A voice out of the deep : I will record the same.

II.

The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth :
The burning stars of the abyss were hurl'd
Into the depths of heaven. The dædal earth,
That island in the ocean of the world,
Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air :
But this divinest universe
Was yet a chaos and a curse,
For thou wert not : but power from worst producing worse,
The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,
And of the birds, and of the watery forms,
And there was war among them, and despair
Within them, raging without truce or terms :
The bosom of their violated nurse
Groan'd, for beasts warr'd on beasts, and worms on worms,
And men on men ; each heart was as a hell of storms.

III.

Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied
His generations under the pavilion
Of the Sun's throne : palace and pyramid,
Temple and prison, to many a swarming million,
Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.
This human living multitude
Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,
For thou wert not ; but o'er the populous solitude,
Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves
Hung tyranny ; beneath, sate deified
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves
Into the shadow of her pinions wide ;
Anarchs and priests who fed on gold and blood,
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
Drove the astonish'd herds of men from every side.

IV.

The nodding promontories, and blue isles,
And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves
Of Greece, bask'd glorious in the open smiles
Of favouring heaven : from their enchanted caves
Prophetic echoes flung dim melody.
On the unapprehensive wild
The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled ;
And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,
Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,
Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
Art's deathless dreams lay veil'd by many a vein
Of Parian stone ; and yet a speechless child,
Verse murmur'd, and Philosophy did strain
Her lidless eyes for thee ; when o'er the Ægean main

V.

Athens arose : a city such as vision
Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
Of kingliest masonry : the ocean-floors
Pave it ; the evening sky pavilions it ;
Its portals are inhabited
By thunder-zoned winds, each head
Within its cloudy wings with sunfire garlanded,
A divine work ! Athens diviner yet
Gleam'd with its crest of columns, on the will
Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set ;
For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
Peopled with forms that mock the eternal dead
In marble immortality, that hill
Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle

VI.

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
Immovably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it cannot pass away!
The voices of thy bards and sages thunder
With an earth-awakening blast
Through the caverns of the past;
Religion veils her eyes; Oppression shrinks aghast:
A winged sound of joy, and love, and wonder,
Which soars where Expectation never flew,
Rending the veil of space and time asunder!
One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew;
One sun illumines heaven; one spirit vast
With life and love makes chaos ever new,
As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

VII.

Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,
Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmæan Mænad,*
She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest
From that Elysian food was yet unweaned;
And many a deed of terrible uprightness
By thy sweet love was sanctified;
And in thy smile, and by thy side,
Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Atilius died.
But when tears stain'd thy robe of vestal whiteness,
And gold profaned thy capitolian throne,
Thou didst desert, with spirit-winged lightness,
The senate of the tyrants: they sunk prone
Slaves of one tyrant: Palatinus sigh'd
Faint echoes of Ionian song; that tone
Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown.

* See the Bacchæ of Euripides.

VIII.

From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,
Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,
Or utmost islet inaccessible,
Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,
Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks,
And every Naiad's ice-cold urn,
To talk in echoes sad and stern,
In that sublimest love which man had dared unlearn?
For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks
Of the Scald's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.
What if the tears rain'd through thy shatter'd locks
Were quickly dried? for thou didst groan, not weep,
When from its sea of death to kill and burn,
The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
And made thy world an undistinguishable heap.

IX.

A thousand years the Earth cried, Where art thou?
And then the shadow of thy coming fell
On Saxon Alfred's olive-cinctured brow:
And many a warrior-peopled citadel,
Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,
Arose in sacred Italy,
Frowning o'er the tempestuous sea
Of kings, and priests, and slaves, in tower-crown'd majesty;
That multitudinous anarchy did sweep,
And burst around their walls, like idle foam,
Whilst from the human spirit's deepest deep
Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb
Dissonant arms; and Art, which cannot die,
With divine wand traced on our earthly home
Fit imagery to pave heaven's everlasting dome.

X.

Thou huntress swifter than the Moon ! thou terror
Of the world's wolves ! thou bearer of the quiver,
Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-winged Error,
As light may pierce the clouds when they dissever
In the calm regions of the orient day !
Luther caught thy wakening glance,
Like lightning, from his leaden lance
Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance
In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay ;
And England's prophets hail'd thee as their queen,
In songs whose music cannot pass away,
Though it must flow for ever : not unseen
Before the spirit-sighted countenance
Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene
Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected mien.

XI.

The eager hours and unreluctant years
As on a dawn-illumined mountain stood,
Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,
Darkening each other with their multitude,
And cried aloud, Liberty ! Indignation
Answer'd Pity from her cave ;
Death grew pale within the grave,
And Desolation howl'd to the destroyer, Save !
When like heaven's sun girt by the exhalation
Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise,
Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation
Like shadows : as if day had cloven the skies
At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,
Men started, staggering with glad surprise,
Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

XII.

Thou heaven of earth! what spells could pall thee then,
In ominous eclipse? a thousand years
Bred from the slime of deep oppression's den,
Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears,
Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away;
How like Bacchanals of blood
Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood
Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood!
When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
The anarch of thine own bewilder'd powers
Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers
Of serene heaven. He, by the past pursued,
Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral towers.

XIII.

England yet sleeps: was she not call'd of old?
Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder
Vesuvius wakens Ætna, and the cold
Snow-crags by its reply are cloven in sunder:
O'er the lit waves every Æolian isle
From Pithecusa to Pelorus
Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus:
They cry, Be dim: ye lamps of heaven suspended o'er us
Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile
And they dissolve; but Spain's were links of steel,
Till bit to dust by virtue's keenest file.
Twins of a single destiny! appeal
To the eternal years enthroned before us,
In the dim West; impress us from a seal,
All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal.

XIV.

Tomb of Arminius ! render up thy dead,
Till, like a standard from a watch-tower's staff,
His soul may stream over the tyrant's head ;
The victory shall be his epitaph,
Wild Bacchanal of truth's mysterious wine,
King-deluded Germany,
His dead spirit lives in thee.
Why do we fear or hope? thou art already free !
And thou, lost Paradise of this divine
And glorious world ! thou flowery wilderness !
Thou island of eternity ! thou shrine
Where desolation clothed with loveliness,
Worships the thing thou wert ! O Italy,
Gather thy blood into thy heart ; repress
The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces.

XV.

O, that the free would stamp the impious name
Of * * * * into the dust ! or write it there,
So that this blot upon the page of fame
Were as a serpent's path, which the light air
Erases, and the flat sands close behind !
Ye the oracle have heard :
Lift the victory-flashing sword,
And cut the snaky knots of this foul gordian word,
Which weak itself as stubble, yet can bind
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
The axes and the rods which awe mankind ;
The sound has poison in it, 'tis the sperm
Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorr'd ;
Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,
To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

XVI.

O, that the wise from their bright minds would kindle
Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,
That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle
Into the hell from which it first was hurl'd,
A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure;
Till human thoughts might kneel alone
Each before the judgment-throne
Of its own aweless soul, or of the power unknown!
O, that the words which make the thoughts obscure
From which they spring, as clouds of glimmering dew
From a white lake blot heaven's blue portraiture,
Were stript of their thin masks and various hue
And frowns and smiles, and splendours not their own,
Till in the nakedness of false and true
They stand before their Lord, each to receive its due.

XVII.

He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever
Can be between the cradle and the grave,
Crown'd him the King of Life. O vain endeavour!
If on his own high will a willing slave,
He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor.
What if earth can clothe and feed
Amplest millions at their need,
And power in thought be as the tree within the seed?
O, what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne,
Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,
And cries: Give me, thy child, dominion
Over all height and depth? if Life can breed
New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan
Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousand fold for one.

XVIII.

Come Thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
Of man's deep spirit, as the morning-star
Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,
Wisdom. I hear the pennons of her car
Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame;
Comes she not, and come ye not,
Rulers of eternal thought,
To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-apportion'd lot?
Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?
O, Liberty! if such could be thy name
Wert thou disjoin'd from these, or they from thee:
If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
Wept tears, and blood like tears? The solemn harmony

XIX.

Paused, and the spirit of that mighty singing
To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn;
Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging
Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,
Sinks headlong through the aerial golden light
On the heavy sounding plain,
When the bolt has pierced its brain;
As summer clouds dissolve, unburthen'd of their rain;
As a far taper fades with fading night,
As a brief insect dies with dying day,
My song, its pinions disarray'd of might,
Droop'd; o'er it closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

MARIANNE'S DREAM.*

A PALE dream came to a Lady fair,
And said, a boon, a boon, I pray!
I know the secrets of the air,
And things are lost in the glare of day,
Which I can make the sleeping see,
If they will put their trust in me.

And thou shalt know of things unknown
If thou wilt let me rest between
The veiny lids, whose fringe is thrown
Over thine eyes so dark and sheen:
And half in hope, and half in fright,
The Lady closed her eyes so bright.

At first all deadly shapes were driven
Tumultuously across her sleep,
And o'er the vast cope of bending heaven
All ghastly-visaged clouds did sweep;
And the Lady ever look'd to spy
If the golden sun shone forth on high.

And as towards the east she turn'd,
She saw aloft in the morning air,
Which now with hues of sunrise burn'd,
A great black Anchor rising there;
And wherever the Lady turn'd her eyes,
It hung before her in the skies.

The sky was as blue as the summer sea,
The depths were cloudless over head,
The air was calm as it could be,
There was no sight or sound of dread,
But that black Anchor floating still
Over the piny eastern hill.

* From The Literary Pocket-Book; or Companion for the Lover of Nature and Art. London: Ollier, 1819.

The Lady grew sick with a weight of fear,
To see that Anchor ever hanging,
And veil'd her eyes; she then did hear
The sound as of a dim low clanging.
And look'd abroad if she might know
Was it aught else, or but the flow
Of the blood in her own veins, to and fro.

There was a mist in the sunless air,
Which shook as it were with an earthquake's shock
But the very weeds that blossom'd there
Were moveless, and each mighty rock
Stood on its basis stedfastly;
The Anchor was seen no more on high.

But piled around, with summits hid
In lines of cloud at intervals,
Stood many a mountain pyramid
Among whose everlasting walls
Two mighty cities shone, and ever
Through the red mist their domes did quiver.

On two dread mountains, from whose crest,
Might seem, the eagle for her brood,
Would ne'er have hung her dizzy nest,
Those tower-encircled cities stood.
A vision strange such towers to see,
Sculptured and wrought so gorgeously,
Where human heart could never be.

And columns framed of marble white,
And giant fanes, dome over dome
Piled, and triumphant gates, all bright
With workmanship, which could not come
From touch of mortal instrument,
Shot o'er the vales, or lustre lent
From its own shapes magnificent.

But still the Lady heard that clang
Filling the wide air far away ;
And still the mist whose light did hang
Among the mountains shook alway,
So that the Lady's heart beat fast,
As half in joy, and half aghast,
On those high domes her look she cast.

Sudden, from out that city sprung
A light that made the earth grow red ;
Two flames, that each with quivering tongue
Lick'd its high domes, and over head
Among those mighty towers and fanes
Dropp'd fire, as a volcano rains
Its sulphurous ruin on the plains.

And hark ! a rush as if the deep
Had burst its bonds ; she look'd behind
And saw over the western steep
A raging flood descend, and wind
Through that wide vale ; she felt no fear,
But said within herself, 'tis clear
These towers are Nature's own, and she
To save them has sent forth the sea.

And now those raging billows came
Where that fair Lady sate, and she
Was borne towards the showering flame
By the wild waves heap'd tumultuously,
And, on a little plank, the flow
Of the whirlpool bore her to and fro.

The waves were fiercely vomited
From every tower and every dome,
And dreary light did widely shed
O'er that vast flood's suspended foam.

Beneath the smoke which hung its night
On the stain'd cope of heaven's light.

The plank whereon that Lady sate
  Was driven through the chasms, about and about,
Between the peaks so desolate
  Of the drowning mountains, in and out,
As the thistle-beard on a whirlwind sails—
While the flood was filling those hollow vales.

At last her plank an eddy crost,
  And bore her to the city's wall,
Which now the flood had reach'd almost;
  It might the stoutest heart appal
To hear the fire roar and hiss
Through the domes of those mighty palaces.

The eddy whirl'd her round and round
  Before a gorgeous gate, which stood
Piercing the clouds of smoke which bound
  Its aery arch with light like blood;
She look'd on that gate of marble clear,
With wonder that extinguish'd fear.

For it was fill'd with sculptures rarest,
  Of forms most beautiful and strange,
Like nothing human, but the fairest
  Of winged shapes, whose legions range
Throughout the sleep of those that are,
Like this same Lady, good and fair.

And as she look'd, still lovelier grew
  Those marble forms;—the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
  Of his own mind did there endure
After the touch, whose power had braided
Such grace, was in some sad change faded.

She look'd, the flames were dim, the flood
  Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude;
  Those marble shapes then seem'd to quiver,
And their fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean.

And their lips moved; one seem'd to speak,
  When suddenly the mountain crack'd,
And through the chasm the flood did break
  With an earth-uplifting cataract;
The statues gave a joyous scream,
And on its wings the pale thin dream
Lifted the Lady from the stream.

The dizzy flight of that phantom pale
  Waked the fair Lady from her sleep.
And she arose, while from the veil
  Of her dark eyes the dream did creep,
And she walk'd about as one who knew
That sleep has sights as clear and true
As any waking eyes can view.

Marlow, 1817.

ARETHUSA.

ARETHUSA arose
  From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,—
  From cloud and from crag,
  With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
  She leapt down the rocks
  With her rainbow locks

Streaming among the streams ;—
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams :
And gliding and springing,
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep ;
The Earth seem'd to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she linger'd towards the deep.

Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook ;
And open'd a chasm
In the rocks ;—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It conceal'd behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below :
The beard and the hair
Of the river God were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he follow'd the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

"Oh, save me ! Oh, guide me !
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair !"
The loud Ocean heard.
To its blue depth stirr'd,
And divided at her prayer ;

And under the water
The Earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam,
Behind her descended,
Her billows unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream :—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rush'd behind,—
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind

Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearled thrones ;
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones :
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a net-work of colour'd light ;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night :—
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the ocean foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain clifts
They passed to their Dorian home.

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,

Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sun-rise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill;
At noon-tide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of Asphodel;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore;—
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
Where they love but live no more.

Pisa, 1820.

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY.

HE fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean,
The winds of heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In one another's being mingle—
Why not I with thine?

See the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower would be forgiven
If it disdain'd its brother:

And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea,
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

January, 1820.

LINES TO AN INDIAN AIR.

ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright:
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
The champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must on thine,
Beloved as thou art!

O lift me from the grass!
I die, I faint, I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast,
Oh! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.

SONG,

ON A FADED VIOLET.

THE odour from the flower is gone,
Which like thy kisses breathed on me;
The colour from the flower is flown,
Which glow'd of thee, and only thee!

A shrivell'd, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandon'd breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm
With cold and silent rest.

I weep—my tears revive it not!
I sigh—it breathes no more on me;
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

STANZAS.

WRITTEN IN DEJECTION, NEAR NAPLES.

THE sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might;
The breath of the moist air is light
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The City's voice itself is soft, like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:

I sit upon the sands alone,
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walk'd with inward glory crown'd —
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live and call life pleasure ;—
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are ;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan ;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoy'd, like joy in memory yet.

December, 1818.

ADONAIS

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS,
AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION, ETC.

BY

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσιν ἑῶος,
Νῦν δὲ θανὼν λάμπεις ἕσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.

PLATO.

PISA

WITH THE TYPES OF DIDOT

MDCCCXXI

[*Facsimile title page of first edition.*]

PREFACE.

Φάρμακον ἦλθε, Βίων, τοτὶ σόν στόμα, φάρμακον εἶδες,
Πῶς τεν τοῖς χείλεσσι ποτέδραμε, κοὐκ ἐγλυκάνθη;
Τίς δὲ βροτος τοσσοῦτον ἀνάμερος. ἢ κεράσαι τοι,
Η δοῦναι λαλέοντι τὸ φάρμακον; ἔκφυγεν ὠδάν.

MOSCHUS, *Epitaph. Bion.*

IT is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem, a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modelled, prove, at least, that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of Hyperion, as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption, in his twenty-fourth year, on the 23rd of February, 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now mouldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses, was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where canker-worms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his Endymion, which appeared in the Quarterly Review, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgments from more candid critics, of the true greatness of his powers, were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one, like Keats's, composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates, is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calumniator. As to "Endymion," was it a poem, whatever may be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated with various degrees of complacency and panegyric, "Paris," and "Woman," and a "Syrian Tale," and Mrs. Lefanu, and Mr. Barrett, and Mr. Howard Payne, and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men, who in their venal good nature, presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery, dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's

life were not made known to me until the Elegy was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of Endymion, was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name!

ADONAIS:

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS.

I.

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead!
O weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!

II.

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamour'd breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorn'd and hid the coming bulk of death.

III.

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend:—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair

IV.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mock'd with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death: but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

V.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perish'd; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

VI.

But now thy youngest, dearest one, has perish'd,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherish'd
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace,
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of mortal change, shall fill the grave which is her maw.*

* Mrs. Shelley's posthumous edition reads

"and the law
Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw;"

and she is not likely to have made so important an alteration without manuscript authority; but we adhere to our rule of abiding by the original text.—ED.

IX.

O, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

X.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead:*
"See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
"Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
"A tear some Dream has loosen'd from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruin'd Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

XI.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Wash'd his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

* Is there not here an unconscious echo of a line in the great elegiac poem by Milton, with which *Adonais* is fully worthy to rank? "For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead."—ED.

XII.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music : the damp death
Quench'd its caress upon his icy lips ;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flush'd through his pale limbs, and past to its eclipse.

XIII.

And others came, ... Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veil'd Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies ;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp ;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimm'd the aërial eyes that kindle day ;
Afar the melancholy thunder moan'd,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

XV.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remember'd lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perch'd on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

XVI.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear,
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the drooping comrades of their youth,*
With dew all turn'd to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

XVII.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

* In Mrs. Shelley's edition this line runs:
"Amid the *faint companions* of their youth."—ED.

XVIII.

Ah woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year ;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone ;
The ants, the bees, the swallows, re-appear ;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier ;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere ;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprison'd flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawn'd on Chaos ; in its steam immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst ;
Diffuse themselves ; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

XX.

The leprous corpse touch'd by this spirit tender
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath ;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning ?—th' intense atom glows
A moment, then is quench'd in a most cold repose.

XXI.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet mass'd in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

XXII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watch'd Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

XXIII.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania,
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV.

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell :
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV.

In the death-chamber for a moment Death
Shamed by the presence of that living Might
Blush'd to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flash'd through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not !" cried Urania : her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

XXVI.

"Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again ;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live ;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art !
But I am chain'd to Time, and cannot thence depart !

XXVII.

"Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirror'd shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have fill'd its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

XXVIII.

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them as they go.*

XXIX.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gather'd into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimm'd or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

* In Mrs. Shelley's edition this line runs:—
"They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them *lying low*."
but as the authority for the alteration seems doubtful, we have preferred to adhere to the original reading.—ED.

XXX.

Thus ceased she : and the mountain shepherds came
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent ;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow ; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

XXXI.

'Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men ; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell ; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

XXXII.

A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation mask'd ;—a Power
Girt round with weakness ;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour ;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ; - even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

XXXIII.

His head was bound with pansies over-blown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew,
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasp'd it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart:
A herd-abandon'd deer, struck by the hunter's dart.

XXXIV

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own;
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scann'd
The Stranger's mien, and murmur'd: "Who art thou?"
He answer'd not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's.—Oh! that it should be so!

XXXV.

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honour'd the departed one;
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI.

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

XXXVII.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remember'd name!
But to thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom, when thy fangs o'erflow;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now

XXXVIII.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead:
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

XXXIX.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awaken'd from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay

XL.

He has outsoar'd the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandon'd Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair.

XLII.

He is made one with Nature : there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird :
He is presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely : he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear ;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass they bear ;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

XLIV.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguish'd not ;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV.

The inheritors of unfulfill'd renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him ; Sidney as he fought
And as he fell, and as he lived and loved,
Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot,
Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved :
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

XLVI.

And many more, whose names on earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry ;
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng !"

XLVII.

Who mourns for Adonais ? oh come forth,
Fond wretch ! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth .
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference : then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night ;
And keep thy heart light, lest, it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
O, not of him, but of our joy : 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions, there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought ;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey ;
And he is gather'd to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness ;
And where its wrecks like shatter'd mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

L.

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand ;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who plann'd
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transform'd to marble ; and beneath
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitch'd in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguish'd breath.

LI.

Here, pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consign'd
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

LII.

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is pass'd from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Laon and Cythna;

OR,

THE REVOLUTION

OF

THE GOLDEN CITY:

A Vision of the Nineteenth Century.

IN THE STANZA OF SPENSER.

BY

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

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PREFACE.

THE Poem which I now present to the world, is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose the Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality, and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers, a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence, nor misrepresentation, nor prejudice, can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose, I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sym-

pathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem, therefore, (with the exception of the first Canto, which is purely introductory,) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at "all the oppressions which are done under the sun;" its tendency to awaken public hope and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World, and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism, civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its

final and inevitable fall ; the transient nature of ignorance and error, and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story, shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong, such as belongs to no meaner desires—let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings, in the vivid presence of which, within his own mind, consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed, that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness, is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven, after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilized mankind, produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the im-

provement, or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788, may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected, as it was impossible to realize. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilized world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state, according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave, suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleapt the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good, have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored, appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the charac-

teristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics,* and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those† of Mr. Malthus, calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character, designing that even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words, to divert the attention of the reader from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have

* I ought to except Sir. W. Drummond's *Academical Questions;* a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.—(*Author's note*)

† It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "Essay on Population," to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "Political Justice."—(*Author's note*)

simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which, genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education indeed can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes, I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes, and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for

the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense, and have read the Poets and the Historians, and the Metaphysicians* whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer, do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepare them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live, though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon;† the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all re-

* In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.—(*Author's note*)

† Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.

semble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were, perhaps, few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler, nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity: you must either succeed or fail. This, perhaps, an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also, by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts, can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left most inadvertently an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age, that its writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own: it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded the opinion of mankind, and would

even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought, therefore, to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract from the midst of insult and contempt, and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the public. If certain critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may *not* be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was laid captive, and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and

Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freed men, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage, entertain of the

Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature, which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

* In the personal conduct of my hero and heroine, there is one circumstance which was intended to startle the reader from the trance of ordinary life. It was my object to break through the crust of those outworn opinions on which established institutions depend. I have appealed therefore to the most universal of all feelings, and have endeavoured to strengthen the moral sense, by forbidding it to waste its energies in seeking to avoid actions which are only crimes of convention. It is because there is so great a multitude of artificial vices that there are so few real virtues. Those feelings alone which are benevolent or malevolent, are essentially good or bad. The circumstance of which I speak, was introduced, however, merely to accustom men to that charity and toleration which the exhibition of a practice widely differing from their own, has a tendency to promote.† Nothing indeed can be more mischievous than many actions innocent in themselves, which might bring down upon individuals the bigoted contempt and rage of the multitude.

* This final paragraph, and the note accompanying it, disappear in *The Revolt of Islam*.—ED.

† The sentiments connected with and characteristic of this circumstance, have no personal reference to the writer. —(*Author's note*)

DEDICATION.

THERE IS NO DANGER TO A MAN THAT KNOWS
WHAT LIFE AND DEATH IS: THERE'S NOT ANY LAW
EXCEEDS HIS KNOWLEDGE; NEITHER IS IT LAWFUL
THAT HE SHOULD STOOP TO ANY OTHER LAW.

*Chapman.**

* These four lines occur towards the close of the third Act of *Byron's Conspiracy*, 1608. Shelley probably took the lines from Lamb's *Specimens:* it is extremely improbable that he had read Chapman's tragedy, which had not then been republished, in its integrity.—ED.

TO

MARY ——— ———.

I.

SO now my summer-task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light.

2.

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour,
Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet!
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlaced branches mix and meet,
Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
Water-falls leap among wild islands green,
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen:
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

3.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep : a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walk'd forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

4.

And then I clasp'd my hands and look'd around—
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which pour'd their warm drops on the sunny ground—
So without shame, I spake :—"I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." I then controll'd
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

5.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind;
Thus power and hope were strengthen'd more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

6.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one!—

Such once I sought in vain ; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone :—
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crush'd and wither'd mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

7.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain ;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert
In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walk'd as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

8.

No more alone through the world's wildnerness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journey'd now : no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherish'd friends turn with the multitude
To trample : this was ours, and we unshaken stood !

9.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return ;
Tho' suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says :—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
And from thy side two gentle babes are born

To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

10.

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain?
Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
Tho' it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
Holier than was Amphion's? I would fain
Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

11.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak:
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whisper'd, to subdue my fondest fears:
And thro' thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

12.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
I wonder not—for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory; still her fame
Shines on thee, thro' the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

13.

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
Which was the echo of three thousand years;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
As some loan man who in a desert hears
The music of his home:—unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

14.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
If there must be no response to my cry—
If men must rise and stamp with fury blind
On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
Sweet friend! can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguish'd light.

LAON AND CYTHNA.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

WHEN the last hope of trampled France had fail'd
Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled
The peak of an aërial promontory,
Whose cavern'd base with the vext surge was hoary;
And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken
Each cloud, and every wave:—but transitory
The calm: for sudden, the firm earth was shaken,
As if by the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

II.

So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder
Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under,
Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep
The orient sun in shadow:—not a sound

Was heard ; one horrible repose did keep
The forests and the floods, and all around
Darkness more dread than night was pour'd upon the ground.

III.

Hark ! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps
Earth and the ocean. See ! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lash'd deeps
Glitter and boil beneath : it rages on,
One mighty stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown,
Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by.
There is a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone
Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy
What calm has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

IV.

For, where the irresistible storm had cloven
That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven
Most delicately, and the ocean green,
Beneath that opening spot of blue serene,
Quiver'd like burning emerald : calm was spread
On all below ; but far on high, between
Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled,
Countless and swift as leaves on autumn's tempest shed

V.

For ever, as the war became more fierce
Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high,
That spot grew more serene ; blue light did pierce
The woof of those white clouds, which seem'd to lie
Far, deep, and motionless ; while thro' the sky
The pallid semicircle of the moon
Past on, in slow and moving majesty ;
Its upper horn array'd in mists, which soon
But slowly fled, like dew beneath the beams of noon.

VI.

I could not choose but gaze; a fascination
Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which drew
My fancy thither, and in expectation
Of what I knew not, I remain'd:—the hue
Of the white moon, amid that heaven so blue,
Suddenly stain'd with shadow did appear;
A speck, a cloud, a shape, approaching grew,
Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere
Beheld afar at sea, and swift it came anear.

VII.

Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains,
Dark, vast, and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains,
Comes forth, whilst with the speed its frame doth quiver,
Sails, oars, and stream, tending to one endeavour;
So, from that chasm of light a winged Form
On all the winds of heaven approaching ever
Floated, dilating as it came: the storm
Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

VIII.

A course precipitous, of dizzy speed,
Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight!
For in the air do I behold indeed
An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:—
And now relaxing its impetuous flight,
Before the aërial rock on which I stood,
The Eagle, hovering, wheel'd to left and right,
And hung with lingering wings over the flood,
And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

IX.

A shaft of light upon its wings descended,
And every golden feather gleam'd therein—

Feather and scale inextricably blended.
The Serpent's mail'd and many-colour'd skin
Shone thro' the plumes its coils were twined within
By many a swoln and knotted fold, and high
And far, the neck receding lithe and thin,
Sustain'd a crested head, which warily
Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's stedfast eye.

X.

Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling
With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sail'd
Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing
Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it fail'd,
Droop'd thro' the air; and still it shriek'd and wail'd.
And casting back its eager head, with beak
And talon unremittingly assail'd
The wreathed Serpent, who did ever seek
Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

XI.

What life, what power, was kindled and arose
Within the sphere of that appalling fray!
For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes,
A vapour like the sea's suspended spray
Hung gather'd: in the void air, far away,
Floated the shatter'd plumes; bright scales did leap,
Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way,
Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep,
Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

XII.

Swift chances in that combat—many a check,
And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil;
Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck
Lock'd in stiff rings his adamantine coil,
Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil,

Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea
Languidly flutter'd, hopeless so to foil
His adversary, who then rear'd on high
His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

XIII.

Then on the white edge of the bursting surge,
Where they had sank together, would the Snake
Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge
The wind with his wild writhings; for to break
That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake
The strength of his unconquerable wings
As in despair, and with his sinewy neck,
Dissolve in sudden shock those linked rings,
Then soar—as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

XIV.

Wile baffled wile, and strength encounter'd strength,
Thus long, but unprevailing:—the event
Of that portentous fight appear'd at length:
Until the lamp of day was almost spent
It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent,
Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last
Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent,
With clang of wings and scream the Eagle past,
Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

XV.

And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean
And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere—
Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion
Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere
Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear
Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound
To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear
And beautiful, and there the sea I found
Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

XVI.

There was a Woman, beautiful as morning,
Sitting beneath the rocks, upon the sand
Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning
An icy wilderness—each delicate hand
Lay cross'd upon her bosom, and the band
Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she sate
Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand
Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait,
Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

XVII.

It seemed that this fair Shape had look'd upon
That unimaginable fight, and now
That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun,
As brightly it illustrated her woe;
For in the tears which silently to flow
Paused not, its lustre hung: she watching aye
The foam-wreathes which the faint tide wove below
Upon the spangled sands, groan'd heavily,
And after every groan look'd up over the sea.

XVIII.

And when she saw the wounded Serpent make
His path between the waves, her lips grew pale,
Parted, and quiver'd; the tears ceased to break
From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail
Escaped her; but she rose, and on the gale
Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair
Pour'd forth her voice; the caverns of the vale
That open'd to the ocean, caught it there,
And fill'd with silver sounds the overflowing air.

XIX.

She spake in language whose strange melody
Might not belong to earth. I heard, alone,

What made its music more melodious be,
The pity and the love of every tone;
But to the Snake those accents sweet were known,
His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat
The hoar spray idly then, but winding on
Thro' the green shadows of the waves that meet
Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

XX.

Then on the sands the Woman sate again,
And wept and clasp'd her hands, and all between,
Renew'd the unintelligible strain
Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien;
And she unveil'd her bosom, and the green
And glancing shadows of the sea did play
O'er its marmoreal depth :—one moment seen,
For ere the next, the Serpent did obey
Her voice, and, coil'd in rest in her embrace it lay.

XXI.

Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes
Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair,
While yet the day-light lingereth in the skies
Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air,
And said : To grieve is wise, but the despair
Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep :
This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare
With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep,
A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.

XXII.

Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone,
Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago.
I wept. Shall this fair woman all alone,
Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go?
His head is on her heart, and who can know

How soon he may devour his feeble prey?—
Such were my thoughts, when the tide 'gan to flow;
And that strange boat, like the moon's shade did sway
Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay.

XXIII.

A boat of rare device, which had no sail
But its own curved prow of thin moonstone,
Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail,
To catch those gentlest winds which are not known
To breathe, but by the steady speed alone
With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now
We are embark'd, the mountains hang and frown
Over the starry deep that gleams below
A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

XXIV.

And as we sail'd, a strange and awful tale
That Woman told, like such mysterious dream
As made the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale!
'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream,
Wide ocean roll'd, when that majestic theme
Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent
Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam
Of love divine into my spirit sent,
And ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

XXV.

Speak not to me, but hear! much shalt thou learn,
Much must remain unthought, and more untold,
In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn:
Know then, that from the depth of ages old,
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold,
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all pervading, manifold,

Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

XXVI.

The earliest dweller of the world alone,
Stood on the verge of chaos: Lo! afar
O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone,
Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar:
A blood red Comet and the Morning Star
Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood,
All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war,
In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood
That fair Star fell, he turn'd and shed his brother's blood.

XXVII.

Thus evil triumph'd, and the Spirit of evil,
One Power of many shapes which none may know,
One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel
In victory, reigning o'er a world of woe,
For the new race of man went to and fro,
Famish'd and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild
And hating good—for his immortal foe,
He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild,
To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

XXVIII.

The darkness lingering o'er the dawn of things,
Was Evil's breath and life: this made him strong
To soar aloft with overshadowing wings;
And the great Spirit of Good did creep among
The nations of mankind, and every tongue
Cursed, and blasphemed him as he past; for none
Knew good from evil, tho' their names were hung
In mockery o'er the fane where many a groan,
As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own.

XXIX.

The Fiend, whose name was Legion; Death, Decay,
Earthquake and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale,
Winged and wan diseases, an array
Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale;
Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil
Of food and mirth, hiding his mortal head;
And, without whom all these might nought avail,
Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread
Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

XXX.

His spirit in their power, and they his slaves
In air, and light, and thought, and language dwell;
And keep their state from palaces to graves,
In all resorts of men—invisible;
But, when in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell,
To tyrant or impostor bids them rise,
Black winged demon forms—whom, from the hell,
His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies,
He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

XXXI.

In the world's youth his empire was as firm
As its foundations—soon the Spirit of Good,
Tho' in the likeness of a loathsome worm,
Sprang from the billows of the formless flood,
Which shrank and fled; and with that fiend of blood
Renew'd the doubtful war—thrones then first shook,
And earth's immense and trampled multitude,
In hope on their own powers began to look,
And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

XXXII.

Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages,
In dream, the golden pinion'd Genii came,

Even where they slept amid the night of ages,
Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame,
Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name!
And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave
New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame
Upon the combat shone—a light to save,
Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

XXXIII.

Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive
With its oppressors in a strife of blood,
Or when free thoughts, like lightnings are alive:
And in each bosom of the multitude
Justice and truth, with custom's hydra brood,
Wage silent war;—when priests and kings dissemble
In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude,
When round pure hearts, a host of hopes assemble,
The Snake and Eagle meet—the world's foundations tremble!

XXXIV.

Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home
Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears;
Tho' thou may'st hear that earth is now become
The tyrant's garbage, which to his compeers,
The vile reward of their dishonour'd years
He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend
Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears
His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend
An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

XXXV.

List, stranger list, mine is an human form,
Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now!
My hand thou feel'st is not a ghost's, but warm

With human blood.—'Twas many years ago,
Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know
The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep
My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe
Which could not be mine own—and thought did keep
In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

XXXVI.

Woe could not be mine own, since far from men
I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child,
By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen;
And near the waves, and thro' the forests wild,
I roam'd, to storm and darkness reconciled:
For I was calm while tempest shook the sky:
But when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled,
I wept, sweet tears, yet too tumultuously
For peace, and clasp'd my hands aloft in ecstasy.

XXXVII.

These were forebodings of my fate—before
A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast,
It had been nurtured in divinest lore:
A dying poet gave me books, and blest
With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest
In which I watch'd him as he died away—
A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest
Of our lone mountains—and this lore did sway
My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

XXXVIII.

Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold,
I knew, but not, methinks, as others know,
For they weep not; and Wisdom had unroll'd
The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe:
To few can she that warning vision shew,

For I loved all things with intense devotion ;
So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow,
Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean
Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

XXXIX.

When first the living blood thro' all these veins
Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth,
And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains
Which bind in woe the nations of the earth.
I saw, and started from my cottage hearth ;
And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness,
Shrick'd, till they caught immeasurable mirth—
And laugh'd in light and music : soon, sweet madness
Was pour'd upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

XL.

Deep slumber fell on me :—my dreams were fire,
Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover
Like shadows o'er my brain ; and strange desire,
The tempest of a passion, raging over
My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover,
Which past ; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far
Came—then I loved ; but not a human lover !
For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star
Shone thro' the woodbine wreaths which round my casement were.

XLI.

'Twas like an eye which seem'd to smile on me.
I watch'd, till by the sun made pale, it sank
Under the billows of the heaving sea ;
But from its beams deep love my spirit drank,
And to my brain the boundless world now shrank
Into one thought—one image—yes, for ever !

Even like the dayspring, pour'd on vapours dank,
The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver
Thro' my benighted mind—and were extinguish'd never.

XLII.

The day past thus ; at night, methought in dream
A shape of speechless beauty did appear :
It stood like light on a careering stream
Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere ;
A winged youth, his radiant brow did wear
The Morning Star : a wild dissolving bliss
Over my frame he breathed, approaching near,
And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness
Near mine, and on my lips impress'd a lingering kiss.

XLIII.

And said : a Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden,
How wilt thou prove thy worth ? Then joy and sleep
Together fled, my soul was deeply laden,
And to the shore I went to muse and weep ;
But as I moved, over my heart did creep
A joy less soft, but more profound and strong
Than my sweet dream ; and it forbade to keep
The path of the sea-shore : that Spirit's tongue
Seem'd whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along

XLIV.

How, to that vast and peopled city led,
Which was a field of holy warfare then,
I walk'd among the dying and the dead,
And shared in fearless deeds with evil men.
Calm as an angel in the dragon's den—
How I braved death for liberty and truth,
And spurn'd at peace, and power, and fame ; and when
Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth,
How sadly I return'd—might move the hearer's ruth :

XLV.

Warm tears throng fast ! the tale may not be said—
Know then, that when this grief had been subdued,
I was not left, like others, cold and dead ;
The Spirit whom I loved in solitude
Sustain'd his child : the tempest-shaken wood,
The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night—
These were his voice, and well I understood
His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright
With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight

XLVI.

In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers,
When the dim nights were moonless, have I known
Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers
When thought revisits them:—know thou alone,
That after many wondrous years were flown,
I was awaken'd by a shriek of woe;
And over me a mystic robe was thrown,
By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow
Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.

XLVII.

Thou fear'st not then the Serpent on thy heart?
Fear it ! she said, with brief and passionate cry,
And spake no more: that silence made me start—
I look'd, and we were sailing pleasantly,
Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky,
Beneath the rising moon seen far away;
Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high
Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay
On the still waters, these we did approach alway.

XLVIII.

And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion,
So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain—

Wild music woke me: we had pass'd the ocean
Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign—
And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain
Of waters, azure with the noon-tide day.
Æthereal mountains shone around—a Fane
Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay
On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

XLIX.

It was a Temple, such as mortal hand
Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream,
Rear'd in the cities of enchanted land:
'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream
Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam
Of the unrisen moon among the clouds
Is gathering—when with many a golden beam
The thronging constellations rush in crowds,
Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

L.

Like what may be conceived of this vast dome,
When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce
Genius beholds it rise, his native home,
Girt by the deserts of the Universe.
Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse,
Or sculpture's marble language can invest
That shape to mortal sense - such glooms immerse
That incommunicable sight, and rest
Upon the labouring brain and overburthen'd breast.

LI.

Winding among the lawny islands fair,
Whose blosmy forest starr'd the shadowy deep,
The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair
Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep,
Encircling that vast Fane's aërial heap:

We disembark'd, and thro' a portal wide
We past—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep
A glimmering o'er the forms on every side,
Sculptures like life and thought; immoveable, deep-eyed.

LII.

We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof
Was diamond, which had drank the lightning's sheen
In darkness, and now pour'd it thro' the woof
Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen
Its blinding splendour—thro' such veil was seen
That work of subtlest power, divine and rare;
Orb above orb, with starry shapes between,
And horned moons, and meteors strange and fair,
On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere!

LIII.

Ten thousand columns in that quivering light
Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away
The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright
With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day;
And on the jasper walls around, there lay
Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought,
Which did the Spirit's history display;
A tale of passionate change, divinely taught,
Which, in their winged dance, unconscious Genii wrought

LIV.

Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne,
The Great, who had departed from mankind,
A mighty Senate;—some, whose white hair shone
Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind.
Some, female forms, whose gestures beam'd with mind;
And ardent youths, and children bright and fair;
And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined

With pale and clinging flames, which ever there
Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

LV.

One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne,
Rear'd on a pyramid like sculptured flame,
Distinct with circling steps which rested on
Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came
Into that hall, she shriek'd the Spirit's name
And fell; and vanish'd slowly from the sight.
Darkness arose from her dissolving frame,
Which gathering, fill'd that dome of woven light,
Blotting its sphered stars with supernatural night.

LVI.

Then first, two glittering lights were seen to glide
In circles on the amethystine floor,
Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side,
Like meteors on a river's grassy shore,
They round each other roll'd, dilating more
And more—then rose, commingling into one,
One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er
A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown
Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

LVII.

The cloud which rested on that cone of flame
Was cloven; beneath the planet sate a Form,
Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame,
The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm
Flow'd forth, and did with softest light inform
The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state
Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm
Sinking upon their hearts and mine—He sate
Majestic, yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

LVIII.

Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw
Over my brow—a hand supported me,
Whose touch was magic strength: an eye of blue
Look'd into mine, like moonlight, soothingly;
And a voice said—Thou must a listener be
This day—two mighty Spirits now return,
Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea,
They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn;
A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn!

LIX.

I look'd, and lo! one stood forth eloquently,
His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow
Which shadow'd them was like the morning sky,
The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow
Thro' the bright air, the soft winds as they blow
Wake the green world—his gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And where his curved lips half open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

LX.

Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair
He stood thus beautiful: but there was One
Who sate beside him like his shadow there,
And held his hand—far lovelier—she was known
To be thus fair, by the few lines alone
Which thro' her floating locks and gather'd cloak,
Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone:—
None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke
Memories which found a tongue, as thus he silence broke.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

THE star-light smile of children, the sweet looks
Of women, the fair breast from which I fed,
The murmur of the unreposing brooks,
And the green light which shifting overhead,
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,
The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers,
The lamp-light thro' the rafters cheerly spread,
And on the twining flax—in life's young hours
These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

II.

In Argolis, beside the echoing sea,
Such impulses within my mortal frame
Arose, and they were dear to memory,
Like tokens of the dead :—but others came
Soon, in another shape : the wondrous fame
Of the past world, the vital words and deeds
Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame,
Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds
Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

III.

I heard, as all have heard, the various story
Of human life, and wept unwilling tears.
Feeble historians of its shame and glory,
False disputants on all its hopes and fears,
Victims who worshipp'd ruin,—chroniclers
Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state
Yet flattering power had given its ministers
A throne of judgment in the grave :—'twas fate,
That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

IV.

The land in which I lived, by a fell bane
Was wither'd up. Tyrants dwelt side by side,
And stabled in our homes,—until the chain
Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide
That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied
In evil, slave and despot; fear with lust,
Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied,
Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust,
Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

V.

Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters,
And the ethereal shapes which are suspended
Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters,
The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended
The colours of the air since first extended
It cradled the young world, none wander'd forth
To see or feel: a darkness had descended
On every heart: the light which shews its worth
Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

VI.

This vital world, this home of happy spirits,
Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind,
All that despair from murder'd hope inherits
They sought, and in their helpless misery blind,
A deeper prison and heavier chains did find,
And stronger tyrants:—a dark gulf before,
The realm of a stern Ruler, yawn'd; behind,
Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore
On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

VII.

Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe
Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought,

And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro
Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought
The worship thence which they each other taught.
Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn
Even to the ills again from which they sought
Such refuge after death !—well might they learn
To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern !

VIII.

For they all pined in bondage : body and soul,
Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent
Before one Power, to which supreme control
Over their will by their own weakness lent,
Made all its many names omnipotent ;
All symbols of things evil, all divine ;
And hymns of blood or mockery, which rent
The air from all its fanes, did intertwine
Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

IX.

I heard as all have heard, life's various story,
And in no careless heart transcribed the tale ;
But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary
In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale
By famine, from a mother's desolate wail
O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood
Pour'd on the earth, and brows anxious and pale
With the heart's warfare ; did I gather food
To feed my many thoughts : a tameless multitude !

X.

I wander'd thro' the wrecks of days departed
Far by the desolated shore, when even
O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted
The light of moonrise ; in the northern Heaven,

Among the clouds near the horizon driven,
The mountains lay beneath one planet pale;
Around me, broken tombs and columns riven
Look'd vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale
Waked in those ruins grey its everlasting wail!

XI.

I knew not who had framed these wonders then,
Nor, had I heard the story of their deeds;
But dwellings of a race of mightier men,
And monuments of less ungentle creeds
Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds
The language which they speak; and now, to me
The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds,
The bright stars shining in the breathless sea,
Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

XII.

Such man has been, and such may yet become!
Ay, wiser, greater, gentler, even than they
Who on the fragments of yon shatter'd dome
Have stamp'd the sign of power—I felt the sway
Of the vast stream of ages bear away
My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast-
Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray
Of the still moon, my spirit onward past
Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

XIII.

It shall be thus no more! too long, too long,
Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound
In darkness and in ruin.—Hope is strong,
Justice and Truth their winged child have found—
Awake! arise! until the mighty sound
Of your career shall scatter in its gust

The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground
Hide the last altar's unregarded dust,
Whose Idol has so long betray'd your impious trust.

XIV.

It must be so—I will arise and waken
The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill,
Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken
The swoon of ages, it shall burst and fill
The world with cleansing fire : it must, it will—
It may not be restrain'd !—and who shall stand
Amid the rocking earthquake stedfast still,
But Laon ? on high Freedom's desert land
A tower whose marble walls the leagued storms withstand !

XV.

One summer night, in commune with the hope
Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins grey
I watch'd, beneath the dark sky's starry cope ;
And ever from that hour upon me lay
The burden of this hope, and night or day,
In vision or in dream, clove to my breast :
Among mankind, or when gone far away
To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest
Which follow'd where I fled, and watch'd when I did rest.

XVI.

These hopes found words thro' which my spirit sought
To weave a bondage of such sympathy,
As might create some response to the thought
Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie
Bright in the out-spread morning's radiancy,
So were these thoughts invested with the light
Of language : and all bosoms made reply
On which its lustre stream'd, whene'er it might
Thro' darkness wide and deep those tranced spirits smite.

XVII.

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim,
And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother,
When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
Even as my words evoked them—and another,
And yet another, I did fondly deem,
Felt that we all were sons of one great mother;
And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem,
As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII.

Yes, oft beside the ruin'd labyrinth
Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
Did Laon and his friend on one grey plinth,
Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep:
And that this friend was false, may now be said
Calmly—that he like other men could weep
Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled

XIX.

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
I must have sought dark respite from its stress
In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
Is hard—but I betray'd it not, nor less
With love that scorn'd return, sought to unbind
The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX.

With deathless minds which leave where they have past
A path of light, my soul communion knew;

Till from that glorious intercourse, at last,
As from a mine of magic store, I drew
Words which were weapons ;—round my heart there grew
The adamantine armour of their power,
And from my fancy wings of golden hue
Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom's tower,
A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI.

I had a little sister, whose fair eyes*
Were loadstars of delight, which drew me home
When I might wander forth ; nor did I prize
Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome
Beyond this child : so when sad hours were come,
And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
Heartless and false, I turn'd from all, to be,
Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

XXII.

What wert thou then ? A child most infantine,
Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
In all but its sweet looks and mien divine ;
Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
A patient warfare thy young heart did wage,
When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought,
Some tale, or thine own fancies would engage
To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
With passion, o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII.

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness,
A power, that from its objects scarcely drew

* An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes.—*Revolt of Islam* I.

One impulse of her being—in her lightness
Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
Which wanders thro' the waste air's pathless blue,
To nourish some far desert : she did seem
Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
Which walks when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's dark stream.

XXIV.

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
A second self, far dearer and more fair ;
Which clothed in undissolving radiancy,
All those steep paths which languor and despair
Of human things, had made so dark and bare,
But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft
Of friends, and overcome by lonely care,
Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV.

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
To love in human life—this sister sweet,*
This child of twelve years old—so she was made
My sole associate, and her willing feet
Wander'd with mine where earth and ocean meet,
Beyond the aërial mountains whose vast cells
The unreposing billows ever beat,
Thro' forests wide and old, and lawny dells,
Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI.

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
When twined in mine : she follow'd where I went,

* this playmate sweet.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Thro' the lone paths of our immortal land.
It had no waste, but some memorial lent
Which strung me to my toil—some monument
Vital with mind : then, Cythna by my side,
Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

XXVII.

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
Parted, but when brief sleep divided us :
And when the pauses of the lulling air
Of noon beside the sea, had made a lair
For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept

XXVIII.

And, in the murmur of her dreams was heard
Sometimes the name of Laon :—suddenly
She would arise, and like the secret bird
Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
With her sweet accents—a wild melody !
Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong
The source of passion whence they rose, to be ;
Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung.

XXIX.

Her white arms lifted thro' the shadowy stream
Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great
Seem'd to me then my purpose, the vast theme
Of those impassion'd songs, when Cythna sate

Amid the calm which rapture doth create
After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state
From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX.

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
A mighty congregation, which were strong
Where'er they trod the darkness to disperse
The cloud of that unutterable curse
Which clings upon mankind :—all things became
Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame

XXXI.

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
The very wind on which it rolls away :
Her's too were all my thoughts, ere yet endow'd
With music and with light, their fountains flow'd
In poesy ; and her still and earnest face,
Pallid with feelings which intensely glow'd
Within, was turn'd on mine with speechless grace,
Watching the hopes which there her heart had learn'd to trace.

XXXII.

In me, communion with this purest being
Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
In knowledge, which in her's mine own mind seeing,
Left in the human world few mysteries :
How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cythna !—what a spirit strong and mild,

Which death, or pain or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness! what genius wild
Yet mighty, was inclosed within one simple child!

XXXIII.

New lore was this—old age with its grey hair,
And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare
To burst the chains which life for ever flings
On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,
So is it cold and cruel, and is made
The careless slave of that dark power which brings
Evil, like blight on man, who still betray'd,
Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV.

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
The empire of the world: thus Cythna taught
Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
Unconscious of the power thro' which she wrought
The woof of such intelligible thought,
As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought
Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV.

Within that fairest form, the female mind
Untainted by the poison clouds which rest
On the dark world, a sacred home did find:
But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
Victorious Evil, which had dispossess'd
All native power, had those fair children torn,
And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
And minister to lust its joys forlorn,
Till they had learn'd to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI.

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
Became my only friend, who had indued
My purpose with a wider sympathy;
Thus, Cythna mourn'd with me the servitude
In which the half of humankind were mew'd
Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves,
She mourn'd that grace and power were thrown as food
To the hyena lust, who, among graves,
Over his loathed meal, laughing in agony, raves.

XXXVII.

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
Even as these thoughts flush'd o'er her.—"Cythna sweet,
Well with the world art thou unreconciled;
Never will peace and human nature meet
Till free and equal man and woman greet
Domestic peace; and ere this power can make
In human hearts its calm and holy seat;
This slavery must be broken"—as I spake,
From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII.

She replied earnestly:—"It shall be mine,
This task, mine, Laon!—thou hast much to gain:
Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine,
If she should lead a happy female train
To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
When myriads at thy call shall throng around
The Golden City."—Then the child did strain
My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX.

I smiled, and spake not—"wherefore dost thou smile
At what I say? Laon, I am not weak,

And though my cheek might become pale the while,
With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek
To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL.

"Whence came I what I am? thou, Laon, knowest
How a young child should thus undaunted be;
Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest,
Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
So to become most good, and great and free,
Yet far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar
In towers and huts are many like to me,
Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore
As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more

XLI.

"Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
And none will heed me? I remember now,
How once, a slave in tortures doom'd to die,
Was saved, because in accents sweet and low
He sung a song his Judge loved long ago,
As he was led to death.—All shall relent
Who hear me—tears as mine have flow'd, shall flow,
Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
As renovates the world; a will omnipotent!

XLII.

"Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces,
Thro' Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells
Will I descend, where'er in abjectness
Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells,

There with the music of thine own sweet spells
Will disenchant the captives, and will pour
For the despairing, from the crystal wells
Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore,
And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more

XLIII.

"Can man be free if woman be a slave?
Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air
To the corruption of a closed grave!
Can they whose mates are beasts, condemn'd to bear
Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
To trample their oppressors? in their home
Among their babes, thou know'st a curse would wear
The shape of woman—hoary crime would come
Behind, and fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

XLIV.

"I am a child:—I would not yet depart.
When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp
Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm
Thy Cythna ever—truth its radiant stamp
Has fix'd, as an invulnerable charm
Upon her children's brow, dark falsehood to disarm.

XLV.

"Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean grey;
Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
I shall remain alone—and thy command
Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,

And, multitudinous as the desert sand,
Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance,
Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI.

"Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
Which from remotest glens two warring winds
Involve in fire, which not the loosen'd fountain
Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
Of evil, catch from our uniting minds
The spark which must consume them;—Cythna then
Will have cast off the impotence that binds
Her childhood now, and thro' the paths of men
Will pass, as the charm'd bird that haunts the serpent's den.

XLVII.

"We part!—O Laon, I must dare nor tremble
To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke,
Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble
The agony of this thought?"—As thus she spoke
The gather'd sobs her quivering accents broke,
And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
I remain'd still for tears—sudden she woke
As one awakes from sleep, and wildly press'd
My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possess'd.

XLVIII.

"We part to meet again—but yon blue waste,
Yon desert wide and deep holds no recess,
Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
We might survive all ills in one caress:
Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless—
Nor yon cold vacant Heaven:—we meet again
Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
When these dissever'd bones are trodden in the plain."

XLIX.

I could not speak, tho' she had ceased, for now
The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep,
Seem'd to suspend the tumult of their flow:
So we arose, and by the star-light steep
Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
But pale, were calm with passion—thus subdued
Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep,
We moved towards our home; where, in this mood,
Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

WHAT thoughts had sway over my sister's slumber*
That night, I know not; but my own did seem
As if they did ten thousand years outnumber
Of waking life, the visions of a dream,
Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
Whose limits yet were never memory's theme:
And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds past,
Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II.

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
More time than might make grey the infant world,
Roll'd thus, a weary and tumultuous space:
When the third came, like mist on breezes curl'd,

* o'er Cythna's lonely slumber.—*Revolt of Islam.*

From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurl'd:
Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearl'd
With dew from the wild streamlet's shatter'd wave,
Hung, where we sat to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III.

We lived a day as we were wont to live,
But Nature had a robe of glory on,
And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
The leafless bough among the leaves alone,
Had being clearer than its own could be,
And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shewn
In this strange vision, so divine to me,
That if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV.

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended,
And we prolong'd calm talk beneath the sphere
Of the calm moon—when, suddenly was blended
With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
And from the cave behind I seem'd to hear
Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete,
And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V.

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
Thro' the air and over the sea we sped,
And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
And the winds bore me—thro' the darkness spread
Around, the gaping earth then vomited
Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung

Upon my flight ; and ever as we fled,
They pluck'd at Cythna—soon to me then clung
A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI.

And I lay struggling in the impotence
Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,
Tho', still deluded, strove the tortured sense
To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
Which in the light of morn was pour'd around
Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare,
And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII.

And ere with rapid lips and gather'd brow
I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek—
It was a feeble shriek, faint, far and low,
Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek,
And grasping a small knife, I went to seek
That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry !
Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
Its whirlwind rage :—so I past quietly
Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie.

VIII.

I started to behold her, for delight
And exultation, and a joyance free,
Solemn, serene and lofty, fill'd the light
Of the calm smile with which she look'd on me :
So that I fear'd some brainless ecstasy,
Wrought from that bitter woe, had wilder'd her—
" Farewell ! farewell !" she said, as I drew nigh.
" At first my peace was marr'd by this strange stir,
Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX.

"Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope,
These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
Their mistress to her task—it was my scope
The slavery where they drag me now, to share,
And among captives willing chains to wear
Awhile—the rest thou know'st—return, dear friend!
Let our first triumph trample the despair
Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend."

X.

These words had fall'n on my unheeding ear,
Whilst I had watch'd the motions of the crew
With seeming careless glance; not many were
Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
To guard some other victim—so I drew
My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
All unaware three of their number slew,
And grasp'd a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

XI.

What follow'd then, I know not—for a stroke
On my raised arm and naked head, came down,
Filling my eyes with blood—when I awoke,
I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
And up a rock which overhangs the town,
By the steep path were bearing me: below,
The plain was fill'd with slaughter,—overthrown
The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow
Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

XII.

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
Whose capital seem'd sculptured in the sky,

Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
Of distant seas, from ages long gone by,
Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
Has power—and when the shades of evening lie
On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
The sunken day-light far thro' the aërial waste.

XIII.

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
Beneath that column, and unbound me there:
And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
A lighted torch, and four with friendless care
Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,
Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
We wound, until the torches' fiery tongue
Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV.

They raised me to the platform of the pile,
That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass
Thro' which they thrust me, open stood the while,
As to its pondrous and suspended mass,
With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound:
The grate, as they departed to repass,
With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom were drown'd.

XV.

The noon was calm and bright:—around that column
The overhanging sky and circling sea
Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn
The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,

So that I knew not my own misery :
The islands and the mountains in the day
Like clouds reposed afar ; and I could see
The town among the woods below that lay,
And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI.

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
Sway'd in the air :—so bright, that noon did breed
No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
Below the smoke of roofs involved in flame
Rested like night, all else was clearly shewn
In that broad glare, yet sound to me none came,
But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII.

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon !
A ship was lying on the sunny main,
Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
Its shadows lay beyond—that sight again
Waked, with its presence, in my tranced brain
The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold :
I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
And watch'd it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII.

I watch'd, until the shades of evening wrapt
Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapt.
It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark :

Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark
Its path no more!—I sought to close mine eyes,
But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark;
I would have risen, but ere that I could rise,
My parched skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX.

I gnaw'd my brazen chain, and sought to sever
Its adamantine links, that I might die:
O Liberty! forgive the base endeavour,
Forgive me, if reserved for victory,
The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.—
That starry night, with its clear silence, sent
Tameless resolve which laugh'd at misery
Into my soul—linked remembrance lent
To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX.

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
And die, I question'd not; nor, though the Sun
Its shafts of agony kindling thro' the air
Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,
Or when the stars their visible courses run,
Or morning, the wide universe was spread
In dreary calmness round me, did I shun
Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI.

Two days thus past—I neither raved nor died—
Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
Built in mine entrails: I had spurn'd aside
The water-vessel, while despair possess'd

My thoughts, and now no drop remain'd ! the uprest
Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
Which had been left, was to my craving breast
Fuel, not food. I chew'd the bitter dust,
And bit my bloodless arm, and lick'd the brazen rust

XXII.

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep
With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep—
A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless !

XXIII.

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
I well remember—like a quire of devils,
Around me they involved a giddy dance ;
Legions seem'd gathering from the misty levels
Of Ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels,
Foul, ceaseless shadows :—thought could not divide
The actual world from these entangling evils,
Which so bemock'd themselves, that I descried
All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

XXIV.

The sense of day and night, of false and true,
Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew,
Was not a phantom of the realms accursed,

Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first
I know not yet, was it a dream or no.
But both, tho' not distincter, were immersed
In hues which, when thro' memory's waste they flow,
Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV.

Methought that gate was lifted, and the seven
Who brought me thither, four stiff corpses bare,
And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
Hung them on high by the entangled hair :
Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair :
As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
And eagerly, out in the giddy air.
Leaning that I might eat, I stretch'd and clung
Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI.

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
The dwelling of the many-colour'd worm
Hung there, the white and hollow cheek I drew
To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
Those horny eyes ? whose was that wither'd form ?
Alas, alas ! it seem'd that Cythna's ghost
Laugh'd in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
Within my teeth !—a whirlwind keen as frost
Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit toss'd.

XXVII.

Then seem'd it that a tameless hurricane
Arose, and bore me in its dark career
Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
On the verge of formless space—it languish'd there,
And dying, left a silence lone and drear,
More horrible than famine:—in the deep
The shape of an old man did then appear,

Stately and beautiful, that dreadful sleep
His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and
weep.

XXVIII.

And when the blinding tears had fall'n, I saw
That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
Of senseless death would be accorded soon;—
When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
The midnight pines: the grate did then unclose,
And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX.

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled:
As they were loosen'd by that Hermit old,
Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
To answer those kind looks—he did infold
His giant arms around me, to uphold
My wretched frame, my scorched limbs he wound
In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
As dew to drooping leaves;—the chain, with sound
Like earthquake, thro' the chasm of that steep stair did
bound,

XXX.

As, lifting me, it fell !—What next I heard,
Were billows leaping on the harbour bar,
And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirr'd
My hair;—I look'd abroad, and saw a star
Shining beside a sail, and distant far
That mountain and its column, the known mark
Of those who in the wide deep wandering are,
So that I fear'd some Spirit, fell and dark,
In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI.

For now indeed, over the salt sea billow
I sail'd: yet dared not look upon the shape
Of him who ruled the helm, altho' the pillow
For my light head was hollow'd in his lap,
And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
Fearing it was a fiend: at last, he bent
O'er me his aged face, as if to snap
Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent,
And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII.

A soft and healing potion to my lips
At intervals he raised—now look'd on high,
To mark if yet the starry giant dips
His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly,
Though he said little, did he speak to me.
"It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!"
I joy'd as those a human tone to hear,
Who in cells deep and lone have languish'd many a year

XXXIII.

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft
Were quench'd in a relapse of wildering dreams,
Yet still methought we sail'd, until aloft
The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
Of morn descended on the ocean streams,
And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
To hang in hope over a dying child,
Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV.

And then the night-wind steaming from the shore,
Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,

And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
Were cut by its keen keel, tho' slantingly ;
Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
The myrtle blossoms starring the dim grove,
As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
On sidelong wing, into a silent cove,
Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone ;
It was a crumbling heap, whose portal dark
With blooming ivy trails was overgrown;
Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown
Within the walls of that grey tower, which stood
A changeling of man's art, nursed amid Nature's brood

II.

When the old man his boat had anchored,
He wound me in his arms with tender care,
And very few, but kindly words he said,
And bore me thro' the tower adown a stair,
Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
For many a year had fall'n. We came at last
To a small chamber, which with mosses rare
Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed
Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III.

The moon was darting through the lattices
Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze,
The old man open'd them; the moonlight lay
Upon a lake whose waters wove their play
Even to the threshold of that lonely home:
Within was seen in the dim wavering ray,
The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV.

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,—
And I was on the margin of a lake,
A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
And snowy mountains:—did my spirit wake
From sleep, as many-colour'd as the snake
That girds eternity? in life and truth,
Might not my heart its cravings ever slake?
Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

V.

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness,
Which darken'd nought but time's unquiet flow
With supernatural shades of clinging sadness;
That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,
By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
Like a strong spirit ministrant of good:
When I was heal'd, he led me forth to shew
The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI.

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
From all my madness told; like mine own heart,

Of Cythna would he question me, until
That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
From his familiar lips—it was not art,
Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
When mid soft looks of pity, there would dart
A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII.

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness roll'd,
My thoughts their due array did re-assume
Thro' the enchantments of that Hermit old;
Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
Of those who sternly struggle to relume
The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewilder'd lot,
And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought—
That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII.

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
When they are gone into the senseless damp
Of graves;—his spirit thus became a lamp
Of splendour, like to those on which it fed
Thro' peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

IX.

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
The loftiest hearts:—he had beheld the woe
In which mankind was bound, but deem'd that fate
Which made them abject, would preserve them so;

And in such faith, some stedfast joy to know,
He sought this cell: but when fame went abroad
That one in Argolis did undergo
Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood:

X.

And that the multitude was gathering wide;
His spirit leap'd within his aged frame,
In lonely peace he could no more abide,
But to the land on which the victor's flame
Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came:
Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue
Was as a sword of truth—young Laon's name
Rallied their secret hopes, tho' tyrants sung
Hymns of triumphant joy our scatter'd tribes among.

XI.

He came to the lone column on the rock,
And with his sweet and mighty eloquence
The hearts of those who watch'd it did unlock,
And made them melt in tears of penitence.
They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
Since this, the old man said, seven years are spent
While slowly truth on thy benighted sense
Has crept; the hope which wilder'd it has lent
Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII.

"Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my waken'd thoughts create
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore

Doctrines of human power my words have told,
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gain'd or ever lost of yore.

XIII.

"In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love, till life seem'd melting thro' their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope now find;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain brook.

XIV.

"The tyrants of the Golden City tremble
At voices which are heard about the streets,
The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
The lies of their own heart; but when one meets
Another at the shrine, he inly weets,
Tho' he says nothing, that the truth is known;
Murderers are pale upon the judgment seats,
And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

XV.

"Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
Bloody and false, and cold:—as whirlpools draw
All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw

This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI.

"For I have been thy passive instrument"—
(As thus the old man spake, his countenance
Gleam'd on me like a spirit's)—"thou hast lent
To me, to all, the power to advance
Towards this unforeseen deliverance
From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear
That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance,
Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
Of goodness, was o'er the world its gather'd beams to bear

XVII.

"But I, alas! am both unknown and old,
And though the woof of wisdom I know well
To dye in hues of language, I am cold,
In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell,
My manners note that I did long repel;
But Laon's name to the tumultuous throng
Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue
Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong.

XVIII.

"Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare
Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength
Of words—for lately did a maiden fair,
Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
The tyrant's heaviest yoke, arise and make
Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear,
And with these quiet words—'for thine own sake
I prithee spare me;'—did with ruth so take

XIX.

"All hearts, that even the torturer who had bound
Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
Loosen'd her weeping then; nor could be found
One human hand to harm her—unassail'd
Therefore she walks thro' the great City, veil'd
In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
'Gainst scorn, and death and pain thus trebly mail'd
And blending in the smiles of that defence,
The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence.

XX.

"The wild-eyed women throng around her path;
From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath,
Or the caresses of his sated lust
They congregate:—in her they put their trust;
The tyrants send their armed slaves to quell
Her power;—they, even like a thunder gust
Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI.

"Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
To woman, outraged and polluted long;
Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
For those fair hands now free, while armed wrong
Trembles before her look, tho' it be strong;
Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
And matrons with their babes, a stately throng!
Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite,

XXII.

"And homeless orphans find a home near her,
And those poor victims of the proud, no less,

Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir,
Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness :—
In squalid huts, and in its palaces
Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
All evil, and her foes relenting turn,
And cast the vote of love in hope's abandon'd urn.

XXIII.

"So in the populous City, a young maiden
Has baffled havock of the prey which he
Marks as his own, whene'er with chains o'erladen
Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,
False arbiter between the bound and free ;
And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns
The multitudes collect tumultuously,
And throng in arms ; but tyranny disowns
Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones.

XXIV.

"Blood soon, altho' unwillingly to shed,
The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
The hood-wink'd Angel of the blind and dead,
Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
When her own standard desolately waves
Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
Many yet stand in her array—'she paves
Her path with human hearts,' and o'er it flings
The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV.

"There is a plain beneath the City's wall,
Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast,
Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
Ten thousand standards wide, they load the blast

Which bears one sound of many voices past,
And startles on his throne their sceptred foe:
He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
And that his power hath past away, doth know—
Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

XXVI.

"The tyrant's guards resistance yet maintain:
Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood;
They stand a speck amid the peopled plain;
Carnage and ruin have been made their food
From infancy—ill has become their good,
And for its hateful sake their will has wove
The chains which eat their hearts—the multitude
Surrounding them, with words of human love,
Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII.

"Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
As night and day those ruthless bands around
The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes
The thoughts of men with hope—as when the sound
Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds
confound,*
Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
The conquerors pause, and oh! may freemen ne'er
Clasp the relentless knees of Dread the murderer!

XXVIII.

"If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
A wretched fall!—uplift thy charmed voice,
Pour on those evil men the love that lies
Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—

* This is the alexandrine alluded to by Shelley in his Introduction, as having been inadvertently left in the middle of a stanza.—ED.

Arise, my friend, farewell!"—As thus he spake,
From the green earth lightly I did arise,
As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
And look'd upon the depth of that reposing lake.

XXIX.

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
And then my youth fell on me like a wind,
Descending on still waters—my thin hair
Was prematurely grey, my face was lined
With channels, such as suffering leaves behind,
Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek
And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
Their food and dwelling; tho' mine eyes might speak
A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak

XXX.

And tho' their lustre now was spent and faded,
Yet in my hollow looks and wither'd mien
The likeness of a shape for which was braided
The brightest woof of genius, still was seen—
One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
And left it vacant—'twas her brother's face—*
It might resemble her—it once had been
The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

XXXI.

What then was I? She slumber'd with the dead.
Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone.
Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
Which steep'd its skirts in gold? or dark and lone,
Doth it not thro' the paths of night unknown,
On outspread wings of its own wind upborne

* 'twas her lover's face.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Pour rain upon the earth? the stars are shewn,
When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII.

Strengthen'd in heart, yet sad, that aged man
I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
And lingering speech, and to the Camp began
My way. O'er many a mountain chain which rears
Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor,
And gaily now me seems serene earth wears
The blosmy spring's star-bright investiture,
A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII.

My powers revived within me, and I went
As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
Thro' many a vale of that broad continent.
At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass
Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was
Not like a child of death, among them ever;
When I arose from rest, a woeful mass
That gentlest sleep seem'd from my life to sever,
As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever.

XXXIV.

Aye as I went, that maiden who had rear'd
The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
Haunted my thoughts. Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
With whatsoe'er it finds, or flowers or weeds!
Could she be Cythna?—Was that corpse a shade
Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?
Why was this hope not torture? yet it made
A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped,
A snowy steep :—the moon was hanging low
Over the Asian mountains, and outspread
The plain, the City, and the Camp below,
Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow,
The City's moon-lit spires and myriad lamps,
Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
And fires blazed far amid the scatter'd camps,
Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earth quake stamps.

II.

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
And those who sate tending the beacon's light,
And the few sounds from that vast multitude
Made silence more profound—Oh, what a might
Of human thought was cradled in that night!
How many hearts impenetrably veil'd,
Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight,
Evil and good, in woven passions mail'd,
Waged thro' that silent throng ; a war that never fail'd !

III.

And now the Power of Good held victory,
So, thro' the labyrinth of many a tent,
Among the silent millions who did lie
In innocent sleep, exultingly I went ;
The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
From eastern morn the first faint lustre show'd
An armed youth—over his spear he bent
His downward face—" A friend !" I cried aloud,
And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV.

I sate beside him while the morning beam
Crept slowly over Heaven, and talk'd with him
Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme!
Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim:
And all the while, methought, his voice did swim,
As if it drowned in remembrance were
Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim:
At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
He look'd on me, and cried in wonder—"thou art here!"

V.

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found;
But envious tongues had stain'd his spotless truth,
And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound,
Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded;
The truth now came upon me, on the ground
Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI.

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes
We talk'd, a sound of sweeping conflict spread,
As from the earth did suddenly arise;
From every tent roused by that clamour dread,
Our bands outsprung and seized their arms—we sped
Towards the sound: our tribes were gathering far,
Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead
Stabb'd in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war,
The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

VII.

Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child
Who brings them food, when winter false and fair
Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
They rage among the camp ;—they overbear
The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair
Descends like night—when " Laon !" one did cry :
Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
The slaves, and widening thro' the vaulted sky,
Seem'd sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory

VIII.

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
Like insect tribes before the northern gale :
But swifter still, our hosts encompassed
Their shatter'd ranks, and in a craggy vale,
Where even their fierce despair might nought avail
Hemm'd them around !—and then revenge and fear
Made the high virtue of the patriots fail :
One pointed on his foe the mortal spear—
I rush'd before its point, and cried, " Forbear, forbear !"

IX.

The spear transfix'd my arm that was uplifted
In swift expostulation, and the blood
Gush'd round its point : I smiled, and—" Oh ! thou gifted
With eloquence which shall not be withstood,
Flow thus !" I cried in joy, " thou vital flood,
Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued—
Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
'Tis well ! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

X.

" Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
Ye murder'd them, I think, as they did sleep !

Alas, what have ye done? the slightest pain
Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep;
But ye have quench'd them—there were smiles to steep
Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe;
And those whom love did set his watch to keep
Around your tents truth's freedom to bestow,
Ye stabb'd as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI.

"O wherefore should ill ever flow from ill,
And pain still keener pain for ever breed?
We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed
On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed
With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven!
And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
And all that lives, or is, to be hath given,
Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven.

XII.

"Join then your hand and hearts, and let the past
Be as a grave which gives not up its dead
To evil thoughts"—a film then overcast
My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed,
When I awoke, I lay 'mid friends and foes,
And earnest countenances on me shed
The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose.

XIII.

And one whose spear had pierced me, lean'd beside
With quivering lips and humid eyes;—and all
Seem'd like some brothers on a journey wide
Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall

In a strange land, round one whom they might call
Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array
Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV.

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
Towards the City then the multitude,
And I among them, went in joy—a nation
Made free by love;—a mighty brotherhood
Link'd by a jealous interchange of good;
A glorious pageant, more magnificent
Than kingly slaves array'd in gold and blood,
When they return from carnage, and are sent
In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

XV.

Afar, the city walls were throng'd on high,
And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
And to each spire far lessening in the sky,
Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung;
As we approach'd a shout of joyance sprung
At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
When from before its face some general wreck had past.

XVI.

Our armies thro' the City's hundred gates
Were pour'd, like brooks which to the rocky lair
Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
Throng from the mountains when the storms are there;
And as we past thro' the calm sunny air
A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed,

The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

XVII.

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision:
Those bloody bands so lately reconciled,
Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
Of anger turn'd to love from ill beguiled,
And every one on them more gently smiled,
Because they had done evil:—the sweet awe
Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
And did with soft attraction ever draw
Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII.

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,
"The friend and the preserver of the free!
The parent of this joy!" and fair eyes gifted
With feelings, caught from one who had uplifted
The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
Like restless clouds before the stedfast sun,—
Where was that Maid? I ask'd, but it was known of none.

XIX.

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
Where was Laone now?—the words were frozen
Within my lips with fear; but to subdue
Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due,
And when at length one brought reply, that she
To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
To judge what need for that great throng might be,
For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

XX.

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
Even tho' that multitude was passing great,
Since each one for the other did prepare
All kindly succour—Therefore to the gate
Of the Imperial House, now desolate,
I past, and there was found aghast, alone,
The fallen Tyrant!—silently he sate
Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
Which starr'd with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI.

Alone, but for one child, who led before him
A graceful dance: the only living thing
Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
Flock'd yesterday, who solace sought to bring
In his abandonment!—she knew the King
Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove
Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring
'Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII.

She fled to him, and wildly clasp'd his feet
When human steps were heard:—he moved nor spoke,
Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet
The gaze of strangers—our loud entrance woke
The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke
Of footfalls answer'd, and the twilight's gloom,
Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII.

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
Her lips and cheeks seem'd very pale and wan,
But on her forehead, and within her eye
Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
Sick with excess of sweetness; on the throne
She lean'd;—the King with gather'd brow, and lips
Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown
With hue like that when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV.

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded;
A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast
One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast,
O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
A shade of vanish'd days,—as the tears past
Which wrapt it, even as with a father's kiss
I press'd those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

XXV.

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
I drew, and of his change compassionate,
With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate
Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare:
Pity, not scorn I felt, tho' desolate
The desolator now, and unaware
The curses which he mock'd had caught him by the hair.

XXVI.

I led him forth from that which now might seem
A gorgeous grave: thro' portals sculptured deep

With imagery beautiful as dream
We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
Over its unregarded gold to keep
Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly,
And as she went, the tears which she did weep
Glanced in the star-light; wilder'd seemed she,
And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII.

At last the tyrant cried, "She hungers, slave,
Stab her, or give her bread!"—It was a tone
Such as sick fancies in a new made grave
Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known,
He with this child had thus been left alone,
And neither had gone forth for food,—but he
In mingled pride and awe cower'd near his throne,
And she a nursling of captivity
Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change might be.

XXVIII.

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no more—
That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone,
Which once made all things subject to its power—
Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour
The past had come again; and the swift fall
Of one so great and terrible of yore,
To desolateness, in the hearts of all
Like wonder stirr'd, who saw such awful change befal.

XXIX.

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
Once in a thousand years, now gather'd round
The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers

Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground,
Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
From the wide multitude: that lonely man
Then knew the burthen of his change, and found,
Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
Refuge from the keen looks which thro' his bosom ran

XXX.

And he was faint withal: I sate beside him
Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share
To his averted lips the child did bear,
But when she saw he had enough, she ate
And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
Hunger then overcame, and of his state
Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI.

Slowly the silence of the multitudes
Past, as when far is heard in some lone dell
The gathering of a wind among the woods—
And he is fall'n! they cry, he who did dwell
Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell
Among our homes, is fall'n! the murderer
Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well
Of blood and tears with ruin! he is here!
Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!

XXXII.

Then was heard—He who judged let him be brought
To judgment! blood for blood cries from the soil
On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil

Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil,
Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.

XXXIII.

"What do ye seek? what fear ye?" then I cried,
Suddenly starting forth, "that ye should shed
The blood of Othman—if your hearts are tried
In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven spread
In purest light above us all, thro' earth
Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed
For all, let him go free; until the worth
Of human nature win from these a second birth.

XXXIV.

"What call ye *justice?* is there one who ne'er
In secret thought has wish'd another's ill?—
Are ye all pure? let those stand forth who hear,
And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill,
If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
With the false anger of the hypocrite?
Alas, such were not true—the chasten'd will
Of virtue sees that justice is the light
Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite."

XXXV.

The murmur of the people slowly dying,
Paused as I spake, then those who near me were,
Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
Clasp'd on her lap in silence;—thro' the air
Sobs were then heard, and many kiss'd my feet
In pity's madness, and to the despair
Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet
His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI.

Then to a home for his repose assign'd,
Accompanied by the still throng he went
In silence, where to soothe his rankling mind,
Some likeness of his ancient state was lent;
And if his heart could have been innocent
As those who pardon'd him, he might have ended
His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent,
Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

XXXVII.

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day
Whereon the many nations at whose call
The chains of earth like mist melted away,
Decreed to hold a sacred Festival
A rite to attest the equality of all
Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake
All went. The sleepless silence did recal
Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII.

The dawn flow'd forth, and from its purple fountains
I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail;
As to the plain between the misty mountains
And the great City, with a countenance pale
I went:—it was a sight which might avail
To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
Now first from human power the reverend veil
Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb
Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

XXXIX.

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
The signs of that innumerable host,
To hear one sound of many made, the warning
Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tost,
While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky
The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
With human joy made mute society,
Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

XL.

To see like some vast island from the Ocean,
The Altar of the Federation rear
Its pile i' the midst; a work, which the devotion
Of millions in one night created there,
Sudden, as when the moonrise makes appear
Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid
Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear
The light of genius; its still shadow hid
Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid!

XLI.

To hear the restless multitudes forever
Around the base of that great Altar flow,
As on some mountain islet burst and shiver
Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow
As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim
Like beams thro' floating clouds on waves below
Falling in pauses, from that Altar dim
As silver sounding tongues breathed an aërial hymn.

XLII.

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
Lethean joy! so that all those assembled

Cast off their memories of the past outworn;
Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled;
So with a beating heart I went, and one,
Who having much, covets yet more, resembled;
A lost and dear possession, which not won,
He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII.

To the great Pyramid I came: its stair
With female quires was throng'd: the loveliest
Among the free, group'd with its sculptures rare;
As I approach'd, the morning's golden mist,
Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kist
With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
Like Athos seen from Samothracia, drest
In earliest light by vintagers, and one
Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne.

XLIV.

A Form most like the imagined habitant
Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to inchant
The faiths of men: all mortal eyes were drawn,
As famish'd mariners thro' strange seas gone
Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light
Of those divinest lineaments—alone
With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
I turn'd in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

XLV.

And, neither did I hear the acclamations,
Which from brief silence bursting, fill'd the air
With her strange name and mine, from all the nations,
Which we, they said, in strength had gather'd there
From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair

Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind
And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare,
Leaning upon my friend, till like a wind
To fever'd cheeks, a voice flow'd o'er my troubled mind

XLVI.

Like music of some minstrel heavenly gifted,
To one whom fiends inthrall, this voice to me;
Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
The platform where we stood, the statues three
Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine,
The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea;
As when eclipse hath past, things sudden shine
To men's astonish'd eves most clear and crystalline.

XLVII.

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
But soon her voice the calmness which it shed
Gather'd, and—"thou art whom I sought to see,
And thou art our first votary here," she said:
"I had a brother once,* but he is dead!—
And of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread
This veil between us two, that thou beneath
Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII.

"For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
Forbid reply;—why men have chosen me
To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
Which flow over the world, have borne me hither

---

* I had a dear friend once.—*Revolt of Islam.*

To meet thee, long most dear; and now unite
Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither
From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beat together,

XLIX.

"If our own will as others' law we bind,
If the foul worship trampled here we fear;
If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!"—
She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there
Three shapes around her ivory throne appear;
One was a Giant, like a child asleep
On a loose rock, whose grasp crush'd, as it were
In dream, sceptres and crown; and one did keep
Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;

L.

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
A human babe and a young basilisk;
Her looks were sweet as Heaven's when loveliest
In Autumn eves.—The third Image was drest
In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies,
Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms, represt
Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
While calmly on the Sun he turn'd his diamond eyes.

LI.

Beside that Image then I sate, while she
Stood, 'mid the throngs which ever ebb'd and flow'd
Like light amid the shadows of the sea
Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
That touch which none who feels forgets, bestow'd;
And whilst the sun return'd the stedfast gaze
Of the great Image as o'er Heaven it glode,
That rite had place; it ceased when sunset's blaze

Burn'd o'er the isles ; all stood in joy and deep amaze.

When in the silence of all spirits there
Laone's voice was felt, and thro' the air
Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair.

1.

"Calm art thou as yon sunset ! swift and strong
As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
That float among the blinding beams of morning;
And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly,
Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy—
Hark! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
Of thy voice sublime and holy;
Its free spirits here assembled,
See thee, feel thee, know thee now,—
To thy voice their hearts have trembled
Like ten thousand clouds which flow
With one wide wind as it flies !—
Wisdom ! thy irresistible children rise
To hail thee, and the elements they chain
And their own will to swell the glory of thy train.

2.

"O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven !
Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being,
Lo ! thou dost re-ascend the human heart,
Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert,
In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
The shade of thee :—now, millions start
To feel thy lightnings thro' them burning
Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure,
Or Sympathy the sad tears turning
To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,

Descends amidst us ;—Scorn, and Hate,
Revenge and Selfishness are desolate—
A hundred nations swear that there shall be
Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free !

3.

" Eldest of things, divine Equality !
Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
Treasures from all the cells of human thought,
And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought,
And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee :
The powerful and the wise had sought
Thy coming, thou in light descending
O'er the wide land which is thine own,
Like the spring whose breath is blending
All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men !—
Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
And all her children here in glory meet
To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4.

" My brethren we are free ! the plains and mountains,
The grey sea shore, the forests and the fountains,
Are haunts of happiest dwellers :—man and woman,
Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow
From lawless love a solace for their sorrow ;
For oft we still must weep, since we are human
A stormy night's serenest morrow,
Whose showers are pity's gentle tears,
Whose clouds are smiles of those that die
Like infants without hopes or fears,
And whose beams are joys that lie
In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;

The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
Borne, swift as sun-rise, far illumines space,
And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace!

5.

"My brethren, we are free! the fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming—
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast,
To the pure skies in accusation steaming,
Avenging poisons shall have ceased
To feed disease and fear and madness,
The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness
Seeking their food or refuge there.
Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
And Science, and her sister Poesy,
Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

6.

"Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!
Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars!
Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!
Victory! Victory! Earth's remotest shore,
Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
The green lands cradled in the roar
Of western waves and wildernesses
Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans
Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
Shall soon partake our high emotions:

Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear
The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear,
Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes,
While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns!"

LII.

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night intwining
Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng;
She, like a spirit thro' the darkness shining,
In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong,
As if to lingering winds they did belong,
Pour'd forth her inmost soul: a passionate speech
With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
Which whoso heard, was mute, for it could teach
To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

LIII.

Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps
The wither'd leaves of Autumn to the lake,
And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
In the shadow of the shores; as dead leaves wake
Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make
Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
The multitude so moveless did partake
Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV.

Over the plain the throngs were scatter'd then
In groups around the fires, which from the sea
Even to the gorge of the first mountain glen
Blazed wide and far: the banquet of the free
Was spread beneath many a dark cypress tree,
Beneath whose spires, which sway'd in the red light,
Reclining as they ate, of Liberty,
And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV.

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles
In the embrace of Autumn ;—to each other
As when some parent fondly reconciles
Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
With her own sustenance ; they relenting weep :
Such was this Festival, which from their isles
And continents, and winds, and ocean's deep,
All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or creep.

LVI.

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
Or poison none this festal did pollute,
But piled on high, an overflowing store
Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set
In baskets ; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII.

Laone had descended from the shrine,
And every deepest look and holiest mind
Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
Were silent as she past ; she did unwind
Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
She mix'd ; some impulse made my heart refrain
From seeking her that night, so I reclined
Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
A festal watchfire burn'd beside the dusky main.

LVIII.

And joyous was our feast ; pathetic talk,
And wit, and harmony of choral strains,

While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
That flow among the isles, held us in chains
Of sweet captivity, which none disdains
Who feels: but when his zone grew dim in mist
Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
Which that delightful day with its own shadow blest.

CANTO SIXTH.

I.

BESIDE the dimness of the glimmering sea,
Weaving swift language from impassion'd themes,
With that dear friend I linger'd, who to me
So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
Of the silver stars; and ever in soft dreams
Of future love and peace sweet converse lapt
Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
Of the last watchfire fell, and darkness wrapt
The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapt.

II.

And till we came even to the City's wall
And the great gate, then, none knew whence or why,
Disquiet on the multitudes did fall:
And first, one pale and breathless past us by,
And stared and spoke not;—then with piercing cry
A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously
Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks

III.

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
Resounded: and—"they come! to arms! to arms!
The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger
Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!"
In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt
On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

IV.

For to the North I saw the town on fire,
And its red light made morning pallid now,
Which burst over wide Asia;—louder, higher,
The yells of victory and the screams of woe
I heard approach, and saw the throng below
Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

V.

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld
Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
I rush'd among the rout to have repell'd
That miserable flight—one moment quell'd
By voice, and looks, and eloquent despair,
As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there
New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI.

I strove, as drifted on some cataract
By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive

Who hears its fatal roar:—the files compact
Whelm'd me, and from the gate avail'd to drive
With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
Their ranks with bloodier chasm:—into the plain
Disgorged at length the dead and the alive
In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
Of blood, from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII.

For now the despot's blood-hounds with their prey,
Unarm'd and unaware, were gorging deep
Their gluttony of death; the loose array
Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
A harvest sown with other hopes, the while,
Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep
A killing rain of fire:—when the waves smile
As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano isle.

VIII.

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
For the carrion fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight
I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead,
Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light
I trod;—to me there came no thought of flight,
But with loud cries of scorn which whoso heard
That dreadful death, felt in his veins the might
Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirr'd,
And desperation's hope in many hearts recurr'd.

IX.

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
Although unarm'd, a stedfast front, and still
Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
Of gather'd eyebrows, did the victors fill

With doubt even in success; deliberate will
Inspired our growing troop, not overthrown
It gain'd the shelter of a grassy hill,
And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown

X.

Immoveably we stood—in joy I found,
Beside me then, firm as a giant pine
Among the mountain vapours driven around,
The old man whom I loved—his eyes divine
With a mild look of courage answer'd mine,
And my young friend was near, and ardently
His hand grasp'd mine a moment—now the line
Of war extended, to our rallying cry
As myriads flock'd in love and brotherhood to die.

XI.

For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven
The horseman hew'd our unarm'd myriads down
Safely, tho' when by thirst of carnage driven
Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown
By hundreds leaping on them:—flesh and bone
Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the shaft
Of the artillery from the sea was thrown
More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laugh'd
In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

XII.

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
So vast that phalanx of unconquer'd men,
And there the living in the blood did welter
Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen
Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged

While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
It 'gan to sink—a fiercer combat raged,
For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII.

Within a cave upon the hill were found
A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
Of those who war but on their native ground
For natural rights: a shout of joyance sent
Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent,
As those few arms the bravest and the best
Seized, and each sixth, thus arm'd, did now present
A line which cover'd and sustain'd the rest,
A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest.

XIV.

That onset turn'd the foes to flight almost,
But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
That coming night would to our resolute host
Bring victory, so dismounting close they drew
Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
Unequal but most horrible;—and ever
Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
Or the red sword, fail'd like a mountain river
Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands forever.

XV.

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood
To mutual ruin arm'd by one behind
Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good,
Who like its shadow near my youth had stood,
Was stabb'd!—my old preserver's hoary hair
With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strew'd
Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI.

The battle became ghastlier—in the midst
I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell
O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shed'st
For love. The ground in many a little dell
Was broken, up and down whose steps befell
Alternate victory and defeat, and there
The combatants with rage most horrible
Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
And impotent their tongues they loll'd into the air,

XVII.

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging;
Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's swift Bane
When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain;
And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
Thou loathed slave. I saw all shapes of death
And minister'd to many, o'er the plain
While carnage in the sun-beam's warmth did seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII.

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm
Around me fought. At the decline of day
Winding above the mountain's snowy term
New banners shone: they quiver'd in the ray
Of the sun's unseen orb—ere night the array
Of fresh troops hemm'd us in—of those brave bands
I soon survived alone—and now I lay
Vanquish'd and faint, the grasp of bloody hands
I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands:

XIX.

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
And they fled, scattering—lo! with reinless speed
A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
Comes trampling over the dead, the living bleed
Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed
On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
Sate one waving a sword;—the hosts recede
And fly, as thro' their ranks with awful might,
Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

XX.

And its path made a solitude.—I rose
And mark'd its coming: it relax'd its course
As it approach'd me, and the wind that flows
Thro' night, bore accents to mine ear whose force
Might create smiles in death—the Tartar horse
Paused, and I saw the shape its might which sway'd,
And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
Of waters in the desert, as she said,
"Mount with me, Laon, now"—I rapidly obey'd.

XXI.

Then: "Away! away!" she cried, and stretch'd her sword
As 'twere a scourge over the courser's head,
And lightly shook the reins:—We spake no word,
But like the vapour of the tempest fled
Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow past.

XXII.

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray,
And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust
Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
Thro' the desert night we sped, while she alway
Gazed on a mountain which we near'd, whose crest
Crown'd with a marble ruin, in the ray
Of the obscure stars gleam'd:—its rugged breast
The steed strain'd up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII.

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean:—
From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion
Of waters, as in spots forever haunted
By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are inchanted
To music, by the wand of Solitude,
That wizard wild, and the far tents implanted
Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood
Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curved flood.

XXIV.

One moment these were heard and seen—another
Past; and the two who stood beneath that night,
Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other;
As from the lofty steed she did alight,
Cythna, (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
My own sweet sister look'd,*) with joy did quail,
And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail.

* My own sweet Cythna look'd—*Revolt of Islam.*

XXV.

And, for a space in my embrace she rested,
Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
While my faint arms her languid frame invested:
At length she look'd on me, and half unclosing
Her tremulous lips, said: "Friend, thy bands were losing
The battle, as I stood before the King
In bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing
The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and swift as on the whirlwind's wing,

XXVI.

"Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer,
And we are here."—Then turning to the steed,
She press'd the white moon on his front with pure
And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin pluck'd, that he might feed;—
But I to a stone seat that Maiden led,
And kissing her fair eyes, said, "Thou hast need
Of rest," and I heap'd up the courser's bed
In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers dispread.

XXVII.

Within that ruin, where a shatter'd portal
Looks to the eastern stars, abandon'd now
By man, to be the home of things immortal,
Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
And must inherit all he builds below,
When he is gone, a hall stood; o'er whose roof
Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow,
Clasping its grey rents with a verdurous woof,
A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII.

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
A natural couch of leaves in that recess,

Which seasons none disturb'd, but in the shade
Of flowering parasites, did spring love to dress
With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, whene'er
The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
Whose intertwining fingers ever there,
Made music wild and soft that fill'd the listening air.

XXIX.

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
May pilot us thro' caverns strange and fair
Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
Of life, our bark doth on its whirlpools bear,
Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air;
Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

XXX.

To the pure all things are pure! Oblivion wrapt
Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
Of public hope was from our being snapt,
Tho' linked years had bound it there; for now
A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air.

XXXI.

In silence which doth follow talk that causes
The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
Of inexpressive speech:—the youthful years

Which we together past, their hopes and fears,
The common blood which ran within our frames,*
That likeness of the features which endears
The thoughts express'd by them, our very names,
And all the winged hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII.

Had found a voice:—and ere that voice did pass,
The night grew damp and dim, and thro' a rent
Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent,
Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
A faint and pallid lustre; while the song
Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent,
Strew'd strangest sounds the moving leaves among;
A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII.

The Meteor shew'd the leaves on which we sate,
And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
Of her soft hair, which bent with gather'd weight
My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses,
With their own fragrance pale, which spring but half uncloses.

XXXIV.

The meteor to its far morass return'd:
The beating of our veins one interval
Made still; and then I felt the blood that burn'd
Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall
Around my heart like fire; and over all

* The blood itself which ran within our frames. *Revolt of Islam*

A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
Two disunited spirits when they leap
In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

XXXV.

Was it one moment that confounded thus
All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
Unutterable power, which shielded us
Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone
Into a wide and wild oblivion
Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI.

I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps
The failing heart in languishment, or limb
Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps
Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim
Thro' tears of a wide mist boundless and dim,
In one caress? What is the strong control
Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb,
Where far over the world those vapours roll,
Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul?

XXXVII.

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
Whose divine darkness fled not, from that green
And lone recess, where lapt in peace did lie
Our linked frames; till, from the changing sky,
That night and still another day had fled;

And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII.

Cythna's sweet lips seem'd lurid in the moon,
Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill,
And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn
O'er her pale bosom:—all within was still,
And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill
The depth of her unfathomable look;—
And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill,
The waves contending in its caverns strook,
For they foreknew the storm, and the grey ruin shook.

XXXIX.

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
Of interchanged vows, which, with a rite
Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamp'd our union.—
Few were the living hearts which could unite
Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night
With such close sympathies, for to each other
Had high and solemn hopes, the gentle might
Of earliest love, and all the thoughts which smother
Cold Evil's power, now link'd a sister and a brother.*

XL.

And such is Nature's modesty,† that those
Who grow together cannot choose but love,

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* With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
From linked youth, and from the gentle might
Of earliest love, delay'd and cherish'd long,
Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.
Revolt of Islam.

† And such is Nature's law divine.—*Ib.*

If faith or custom do not interpose,
Or common slavery mar what else might move
All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove
Which shades the springs of Æthiopian Nile,
That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile;

XLI.

And clings to them, when darkness may dissever
The close caresses of all duller plants
Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we forever
Were link'd, for love had nursed us in the haunts
Where knowledge, from its secret source inchants
Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing,
Ere yet its gather'd flood feeds human wants,
As the great Nile feeds Egypt, ever flinging
Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII.

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell.
Mix'd with mine own in the tempestuous air,—
And so we sate, until our talk befel
Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison: well,
For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
But Cythna's eyes look'd faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII.

Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken
The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane,

Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken,
Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
Following me obediently; with pain
Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
When lips and heart refuse to part again,
Till they have told their fill, could scarce express
The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness.

XLIV.

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
That willing steed—the tempest and the night.
Which gave my path its safety as I rode
Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite
The darkness and the tumult of their might
Borne on all winds.—Far thro' the streaming rain
Floating at intervals the garments white
Of Cythna gleam'd, and her voice once again
Came to me on the gust, and soon I reach'd the plain.

XLV.

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
Turn'd on the lightning's cleft exultingly;
And when the earth beneath his tameless tread,
Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread
His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
Mock the fierce peal with neighings;—thus we sped
O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory

XLVI.

There was a desolate village in a wood
Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
The hungry storm; it was a place of blood,
A heap of hearthless walls;—the flames were dead

Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky
Flooded with lightning was ribb'd overhead
By the black rafters, and around did lie
Women, and babes, and men, slaughter'd confusedly

XLVII.

Beside the fountain in the market-place
Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare
With horny eyes upon each other's face,
And on the earth and on the vacant air,
And upon me, close to the waters where
I stoop'd to slake my thirst;—I shrank to taste,
For the salt bitterness of blood was there;
But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII.

No living thing was there beside one woman,
Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
Was wither'd from a likeness of aught human
Into a fiend, by some strange misery:
Soon as she heard my steps she leap'd on me,
And glued her burning lips to mine, and laugh'd
With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
And cried, "Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaff'd
The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the draught!

XLIX.

"My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry,
Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
When I came home, one in the blood did lie
Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
Since then I have no longer been a mother,
But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither

I flit about, that I may slay and smother:—
All lips which I have kiss'd must surely wither,
But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together!

L.

"What seek'st thou here? the moonlight comes in flashes,—
The dew is rising dankly from the dell—
'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
In my sweet boy, now full of worms—but tell
First what thou seek'st."—"I seek for food."—"'Tis well,
Thou shalt have food; Famine, my paramour,
Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell
Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
Those whom these lips have kiss'd, alone. No more, no more!"

LI.

As thus she spake, she grasp'd me with the strength
Of madness, and by many a ruin'd hearth
She led, and over many a corpse:—at length
We came to a lone hut, where on the earth
Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
Gathering from all those homes now desolate,
Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
Among the dead—round which she set in state
A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

LII.

She leap'd upon a pile, and lifted high
Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried: "Eat!
Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die!"
And then she spurn'd the loaves with her pale feet
Towards her bloodless guests;—that sight to meet
Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat
Despair, I might have raved in sympathy;
But now I took the food that woman offer'd me;

LIII.

And vainly having with her madness striven
If I might win her to return with me,
Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven
The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly,
As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
The dark steed bore me, and the mountain grey
Soon echo'd to his hoofs, and I could see
Cythna among the rocks, where she alway
Had sate with anxious eyes fix'd on the lingering day

LIV.

And joy was ours to meet: she was most pale,
Famish'd, and wet and weary, so I cast
My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
As to our home we went, and thus embraced,
Her full heart seem'd a deeper joy to taste,
Than e'er the prosperous know; the steed behind
Trod peacefully along the mountain waste,
We reach'd our home ere morning could unbind
Night's latest veil, and on our bridal couch reclined.

LV.

Her chill'd heart having cherish'd in my bosom
And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom
Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
After cold showers, like rainbows woven there,
Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
Of health, and hope; and sorrow languish'd near it,
And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO SEVENTH.

I.

So we sate joyous as the morning ray
Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
Now lingering on the winds; light airs did play
Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
And we sate link'd in the inwoven charm
Of converse and caresses sweet and deep,
Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
Time, tho' he wield the darts of death and sleep,
And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II.

I told her of my sufferings and my madness,
And how, awaken'd from that dreamy mood
By Liberty's uprise, the strength of gladness
Came to my spirit in my solitude;
And all that now I was, while tears pursued
Each other down her fair and listening cheek
Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood
From sunbright dales; and when I ceased to speak,
Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III.

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
Like broken memories of many a heart
Woven into one; to which no firm assurance,
So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
She said that not a tear did dare to start
From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm
When from all mortal hope she did depart,
Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term,
And that she reach'd the port without one fear infirm.

IV.

One was she among many there, the thralls
Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust: and they
Laugh'd mournfully in those polluted halls;
But she was calm and sad, musing alway
On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

V.

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
One moment to great Nature's sacred power
He bent, and was no longer passionless;
But when he bade her to his secret bower
Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore
Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
And mightier looks avail'd not; then he bore
Again his load of slavery, and became
A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name

VI.

She told me what a loathsome agony
Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight
Foul as in dreams most fearful imagery
To dally with the mowing dead—that night
All torture, fear, or horror made seem light
Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day
Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight
Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

VII.

Her madness was a beam of light, a power
Which dawn'd thro' the rent soul; and words it gave

Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
Which might not be withstood, whence none could save
All who approach'd their sphere, like some calm wave
Vex'd into whirlpools by the chasms beneath ;
And sympathy made each attendant slave
Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII.

The King felt pale upon his noonday throne :
At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,
One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown
From human shape into an instrument
Of all things ill—distorted, bow'd and bent.
The other was a wretch from infancy
Made dumb by poison ; who nought knew or meant
But to obey : from the fire-isles came he,
A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX.

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
Until upon their path the morning broke ;
They anchor'd then, where, be there calm or breeze,
The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
Shakes with the sleepless surge ;—the Æthiop there
Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
Like iron clasp'd her feet, and plunged with her
Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

X.

" Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
Of morning light, into some shadowy wood,
He plunged thro' the green silence of the main,
Thro' many a cavern which the eternal flood

Had scoop'd, as dark lairs for its monster brood ;
And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
And among mightier shadows which pursued
His heels, he wound : until the dark rocks under
He touch'd a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI.

" A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling
Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling :
And in that roof of crags a space was riven
Thro' which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
Shot thro' the lines of many waves inwoven,
Like sunlight thro' acacia woods at even,
Thro' which, his way the diver having cloven,
Past like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII.

" And then," she said, " he laid me in a cave
Above the waters, by that chasm of sea,
A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
Imprison'd, boil'd and leap'd perpetually,
Down which, one moment resting, he did flee.
Winning the adverse depth ; that spacious cell
Like an upaithric temple wide and high,
Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
Was pierced with one round cleft thro' which the sun beams fell.

XIII.

" Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl and sand
Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven
With mystic legends by no mortal hand,

Left there, when thronging to the moon's command,
The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state
Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV.

"The fiend of madness which had made its prey
Of my poor heart, was lull'd to sleep awhile:
There was an interval of many a day,
And a sea-eagle brought me food the while,
Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
And who, to be the jailor had been taught,
Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile
Like light and rest at morn and even is sought,
That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought

XV.

"The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping
In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there;
And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore
Thy mangled limbs for food!—thus all things were
Transform'd into the agony which I wore
Even as a poison'd robe around my bosom's core.

XVI.

"Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing,
The eagle, and the fountain, and the air;
Another frenzy came—there seem'd a being
Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,

As if some living thing had made its lair
Even in the fountains of my life :—a long
And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
Then grew, like sweet reality among
Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII.

"Methought I was about to be a mother—
Month after month went by, and still I dream'd
That we should soon be all to one another,
I and my child ; and still new pulses seem'd
To beat beside my heart, and still I deem'd
There was a babe within—and when the rain
Of winter thro' the rifted cavern stream'd,
Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

XVIII.

"It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were thine,
Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth
It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine
Thine own beloved :—'twas a dream divine ;
Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
Tho' 'twas a dream."—Then Cythna did uplift
Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift :

XIX.

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears ;
Which, having past, as one whom sobs oppress,
She spoke : "Yes, in the wilderness of years

Her memory, aye, like a green home appears,
She suck'd her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
For many months. I had no mortal fears;
Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,
It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

XX.

"I watch'd the dawn of her first smiles and soon
When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
Or sun, from many a prism within the cave
Their gem-born shadows to the water gave,
Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
Slighting, it linger'd there, and could not understand.

XXI.

"Methought her looks began to talk with me;
And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
Her lips would frame,—so sweet it could not be,
That it was meaningless; her touch would meet
Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
In response while we slept; and on a day
When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
Both infants, weaving wings for time's perpetual way.

XXII.

"Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
Weary with joy, and tired with our delight,
We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
On one fair mother's bosom:—from that night

She fled ;—like those illusions clear and bright,
Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
Pause ere it wakens tempest ;—and her flight,
Tho' 'twas the death of brainless phantasy,
Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII.

"It seem'd that in the dreary night the diver
Who brought me thither, came again, and bore
My child away. I saw the waters quiver,
When he so swiftly sunk, as once before :
Then morning came—it shone even as of yore,
But I was changed—the very life was gone
Out of my heart—I wasted more and more,
Day after day, and sitting there alone,
Vex'd the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV.

"I was no longer mad, and yet methought
My breasts were swoln and changed :—in every vein
The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain
It ebb'd even to its wither'd springs again :
When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turn'd
From that most strange delusion, which would fain
Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearn'd
With more than human love, then left it unreturn'd.

XXV.

"So now my reason was restored to me,
I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast ;

But all that cave and all its shapes possest
By thoughts which could not fade, renew'd each one
Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blest
Me heretofore: I sitting there alone,
Vex'd the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI.

"Time past, I know not whether months or years;
For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made
Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears:
And I became at last even as a shade,
A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have prey'd,
'Till it be thin as air; until, one even
A Nautilus upon the fountain play'd,
Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII.

"And when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat,
Fled near me as for shelter; on slow wing,
The Eagle, hovering o'er his prey did float;
But when he saw that I with fear did note
His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
The eager plumes subsided on his throat—
He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII.

"This waken'd me, it gave me human strength
And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
But I resumed my ancient powers at length;
My spirit felt again like one of those

Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows,
Immutable, resistless, strong to save,
Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX.

"And where was Laon? might my heart be dead,
While that far dearer heart could move and be?
Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread,
Which I had sworn to rend? I might be free,
Could I but win that friendly bird to me,
To bring me ropes; and long in vain I sought
By intercourse of mutual imagery
Of objects, if such aid he could be taught;
But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

XXX.

"We live in our own world, and mine was made
From glorious phantasies of hope departed:
Aye, we are darken'd with their floating shade,
Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted
Such power to me, I became fearless-hearted,
My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
Its lustre on all hidden things, behind
Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI.

"My mind became the book through which I grew
Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
To me the keeping of its secrets gave—

One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
Whose calm reflects all moving things that are,
Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear;
Justice, and truth, and time, and the world's natural sphere.

XXXII.

"And on the sand would I make signs to range
These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought;
Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change
A subtler language within language wrought:
The key of truths which once were dimly taught
In old Crotona;—and sweet melodies
Of love, in that lone solitude I caught
From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
Shone thro' my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII.

"Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
As in a wingèd chariot, o'er the plain
Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill
My heart with joy, and there we sate again
On the grey margin of the glimmering main,
Happy as then but wiser far, for we
Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
Fear, Faith, and Slavery; and mankind was free,
Equal, and pure and wise, in wisdom's prophecy.

XXXIV.

"For to my will my fancies were as slaves
To do their sweet and subtile ministries;
And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
They would make human throngs gather and rise

To combat with my overflowing eyes,
And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
Familiar with the shock and the surprise
And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts
anew.

XXXV.

"And thus my prison was the populous earth—
Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
Before the east has given its glory birth—
Religion's pomp made desolate by the scorn
Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn,
And dwellings of mild people interspersed
With undivided fields of ripening corn,
And love made free,—a hope which we have nurst
Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

XXXVI.

"All is not lost! there is some recompence
For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
Even throned Evil's splendid impotence,
Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
Of life and death past fearlessly and well,
Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII.

"Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
In storm-encompass'd isles, we cherish yet
In this dark ruin—such were mine even there;
As in its sleep some odorous violet,
While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,

Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprise,
Or, as ere Scythian frost in fear has met
Spring's messengers descending from the skies,
The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII.

"So years had past, when sudden earthquake rent
The depth of ocean, and the cavern crack'd
With sound, as if the world's wide continent
Had fall'n in universal ruin wrack'd;
And thro' the clift stream'd in one cataract,
The stifling waters:—when I woke, the flood
Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sack'd
Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode
Before me yawn'd—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad

XXXIX.

"Above me was the sky, beneath the sea:
I stood upon a point of shatter'd stone,
And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
With splash and shock into the deep—anon
All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
I felt that I was free! the Ocean-spray
Quiver'd beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
Around, and in my hair the winds did play
Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

XL.

"My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
Tho' it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
The strength of tempest: day was almost over,
When thro' the fading light I could discover
A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
With the north wind—its moving shade did cover

The twilight deep;—the mariners in dread
Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI.

"And when they saw one sitting on a crag,
They sent a boat to me;—the sailors row'd
In awe thro' many a new and fearful jag
Of overhanging rock, thro' which there flow'd
The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
They came and question'd me, but when they heard
My voice, they became silent, and they stood
And moved as men in whom new love had stirr'd
Deep thoughts: so to the ship we past without a word.

CANTO EIGHTH.

I.

"I SATE beside the steersman then, and gazing
Upon the west, cried, 'Spread the sails! behold!
The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
Over the mountains yet;—the City of Gold
Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold;
The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
Beneath the stars, they tremble with the cold!
Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea!—
Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!'

II.

"The Mariners obey'd—the Captain stood
Aloof, and whispering to the Pilot, said,
'Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued

By wicked ghosts: a Phantom of the Dead,
The night before we sail'd, came to my bed
In dream, like that!'—The Pilot then replied,
'It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride,
Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside.'

III.

"We past the islets, borne by wind and stream,
And as we sail'd, the Mariners came near
And throng'd around to listen;—in the gleam
Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear
May not attaint, and my calm voice did rear;
Ye all are human—yon broad moon gives light
To millions who the self-same likeness wear,
Even while I speak—beneath this very night,
Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV.

"What dream ye? Your own hands have built an home,
Even for yourselves on a beloved shore:
For some, fond eyes are pining till they come,
How they will greet him when his toils are o'er,
And laughing babes rush from the well-known door!
Is this your care? ye toil for your own good—
Ye feel and think—has some immortal power
Such purposes? or in a human mood,
Dream ye that God thus builds* for man in solitude?

V.

"What then is God? ye mock yourselves, and give
A human heart to what ye cannot know:

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* Dream ye some Power thus builds, &c.—*Revolt of Islam*

As if the cause of life could think and live!
'Twere as if man's own works should feel, and shew
The hopes, and fears, and thoughts from which they flow,
And he be like to them. Lo! Plague is free
To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny.

VI.

"What then is God? some moon-struck sophist stood
Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown
Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
The Form he saw and worshipp'd was his own,
His likeness in the world's vast mirror shewn;
And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
Nursed by fear's dew of poison, grows thereon,
And that men say, God has appointed Death*
On all who scorn his will to wreak immortal wrath.

VII.

"Men say they have seen God, and heard from God,
Or known from others who have known such things,
And that his will is all our law, a rod
To scourge us into slaves—that Priests and Kings,†
Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings

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* And that men say that Power has chosen Death
On all who scorn its laws to wreak, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

† Men say that they themselves have heard and seen
Or known from others who have known such things,
A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between
Wields an invisible rod that Priests and Kings—*Ibid.*

Man's free-born soul beneath the oppressor's heel,
Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel,
Tho' truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII.

"And it said, that God will punish wrong;*
Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain!
And his red hell's undying snakes among †
Will bind the wretch on whom he fix'd a stain,
Which, like a plague, a burthen, and a bane,
Clung to him while he lived;—for, love and hate,
Virtue and vice, they say, are difference vain—
The will of strength is right—this human state
Tyrants that they may rule, with lies thus desolate

IX.

"Alas, what strength? opinion is more frail
Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
Even while we gaze, tho' it awhile avail
To hide the orb of truth—and every throne
Of Earth or Heaven, tho' shadow, rests thereon,
One shape of many names:—for this ye plough
The barren waves of ocean, hence each one
Is slave or tyrant, all betray and bow,
Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

X.

"Its names are each a sign which maketh holy
All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade
Of power,—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made.
A law to which mankind has been betray'd;

* And it is said, this Power will punish wrong. —*Revolt of Islam*
† And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among—*Ibid.*

And human love, is as the name well known
Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
In bloody grave, and into darkness thrown,
Gather'd her wilder'd babes around him as his own.

XI.

"O love! who to the hearts of wandering men
Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves!
Justice, or truth, or joy! those only can
From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves
Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
To give to all an equal share of good,
To track the steps of freedom tho' thro' graves
She pass, to suffer all in patient mood,
To weep for crime tho' stain'd with thy friend's dearest blood.

XII.

"To feel the peace of self-contentment's lot,
To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought,
Until life's sunny day is quite gone down,
To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe;
To live, as if to love and live were one,—
This is not faith or law, nor those who bow
To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

XIII.

"But children near their parents tremble now,
Because they must obey—one rules another,
For it is said God rules both high and low,
And man is made* the captive of his brother,

* And as one Power rules both high and low,
So man is made, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

And Hate is throned on high with Fear his mother,
Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
Whence love yet flow'd when faith had choked all other,
Are darken'd—Woman, as the bond-slave, dwells
Of man a slave; and life is poison'd in its wells.

XIV.

"Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
A lasting chain for his own slavery;—
In fear and restless care that he may live
He toils for others, who must ever be
The joyless thralls of like captivity;
He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin.
He builds the altar, that its idol's fee
May be his very blood; he is pursuing
O, blind and willing wretch! his own obscure undoing.

XV.

"Woman!—she is his slave, she has become
A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
The outcast of a desolated home,
Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,
As calm decks the false Ocean:—well ye know
What Woman is, for none of Woman born
Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
Which ever from the oppress'd to the oppressors flow.

XVI.

"This need not be; ye might arise, and will
That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory.
That love, which none may bind, be free to fill
The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary
With crime, be quench'd and die.—Yon promontory
Even now eclipses the descending moon!—

Dungeons and palaces are transitory—
High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII.

"Let all be free and equal!—from your hearts
I feel an echo; thro' my inmost frame
Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts—
Whence come ye, friends? alas, I cannot name
All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
On your worn faces; as in legends old
Which make immortal the disastrous fame
Of conquerors and impostors false and bold,
The discord of your hearts, I in your looks behold.

XVIII.

"Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood
Forth on the earth? or bring ye steel and gold,
That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
Or from the famish'd poor, pale, weak, and cold,
Bear ye the earnings of their toil? unfold!
Speak! are your hands in slaughter's sanguine hue
Stain'd freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as dew,
And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

XIX.

Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
All mortal thoughts confess a common home:
Blush not for what may to thyself impart
Stains of inevitable crime: the doom
Is this, which has, or may, or must become
Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the spoil
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb.
Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil

XX.

Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate,
And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
Ah! it is dark with many a blazon'd name
Of misery—all are mirrors of the same;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen
Dipp'd in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorn'd to make their hearts his den.

XXI.

"Yes, it is Hate, that shapeless fiendly thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine,
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting;
Which, when the heart its snaky folds intwine
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine
When Amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII.

"Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine own.
It is the dark idolatry of self
Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan;
O vacant expiation! be at rest.—
The past is Death's, the future is thine own;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast
A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

XXIII.

"Speak thou! whence come ye?"...A Youth made reply,
"Wearily, wearily o'er the boundless deep

We sail;—thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep
Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonour'd brow;
Even from our childhood have we learn'd to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dream'd of hope or refuge until now.

XXIV.

"Yes—I must speak—my secret should have perish'd
Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherish'd,
But that no human bosom can withstand
Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command
Of thy keen eyes:—yes, we are wretched slaves,
Who from their wonted loves and native land
Are reft, and bear o'er the dividing waves
The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV.

"We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest,
Among the daughters of those mountains lone,
We drag them there, where all things best and rarest
Are stain'd and trampled:—years have come and gone
Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
No thought;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid
On mine with light of mutual love have shone—
She is my life,—I am but as the shade
Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

XXVI.

"For she must perish in the tyrant's hall—
Alas, alas!"—He ceased, and by the sail
Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,
And still before the ocean and the gale

The ship fled fast 'till the stars 'gan to fail,
And round me gather'd with mute countenance,
The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale
With toil, the Captain with grey locks, whose glance
Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII.

"Recede not! pause not now! thou art grown old,
But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
Are children of one mother, even Love—behold!
The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth
Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
A heart which not the serpent custom's tooth
May violate?—be free! and even here,
Swear to be firm till death! they cried, 'We swear! we swear!'

XXVIII.

"The very darkness shook, as with a blast
Of subterranean thunder at the cry;
The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
Into the night, as if the sea, and sky,
And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
And on the deck, with unaccustom'd eye
The captives gazing stood, and every one
Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

XXIX.

"They were earth's purest children, young and fair,
With eyes the shrines of unawaken'd thought,
And brows as bright as spring or morning, ere
Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
In characters of cloud which wither not.—

The change was like a dream to them; but soon
They knew the glory of their alter'd lot,
In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

XXX.

"But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair,
Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair,
Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
Shew'd that her soul was quivering; and full soon
That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look
On her and me, as for some speechless boon:
I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook

CANTO NINTH.

I.

"THAT night we anchor'd in a woody bay,
And sleep no more around us dared to hover
Than, when all doubt and fear has past away,
It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
Whose heart is now at rest: thus night past over
In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover
The waning stars prank'd in the waters blue,
And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew

II.

"The joyous mariners, and each free maiden,
Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,

With woodland spoil most innocently laden;
Soon wreathes of budding foliage seem'd to flow
Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go
Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle
Doom'd to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

III.

"The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh,
In fear and wonder; and on every steep
Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry,
Like earth's own voice lifted unconquerably
To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty!
They heard!—As o'er the mountains of the earth
From peak to peak leap on the beams of morning's birth:

IV.

"So from the cry over the boundless hills,
Sudden was caught one universal sound,
Like a volcano's voice, whose thunder fills
Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
A path thro' human hearts with stream which drown'd
Its struggling fears and cares, dark custom's brood,
They knew not whence it came, but felt around
A wide contagion pour'd—they call'd aloud
On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V.

"We reach'd the port—alas! from many spirits
The wisdom which had waked that cry was fled,
Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,

Upon the night's devouring darkness shed:
Yet soon bright day will burst - even like a chasm
Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
To cleanse the fever'd world as with an earthquake's spasm!

VI.

"I walk'd thro' the great City then, but free
From shame or fear; those toil-worn Mariners
And happy Maidens did encompass me;
And like a subterranean wind that stirs
Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
From every human soul, a murmur strange
Made as I past; and many wept, with tears
Of joy and awe, and winged thoughts did range,
And half-extinguish'd words, which prophesied of change.

VII.

"For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,—
As one who from some mountain's pyramid,
Points to the unrisen sun!—the shades approve
His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
Wisdom, the mail of tried affections wove
For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill,
Thrice steep'd in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII.

"Some said I was a maniac wild and lost:
Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave
The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:—
Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave,
Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,

The forest, and the mountain came;—some said
I was the child of God, sent down to save
Women from bonds and death, and on my head
The burthen of their sins would frightfully be laid.

IX.

"But soon my human words found sympathy
In human hearts: the purest and the best,
As friend with friend made common cause with me,
And they were few, but resolute;—the rest,
Ere yet success the enterprise had blest,
Leagued with me in their hearts;—their meals, their slumber,
Their hourly occupations were possest
By hopes which I had arm'd to overnumber,
Those hopes of meaner cares, which life's strong wings encumber.

X.

"But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken
From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
Sought me: one truth their dreary prison has shaken,—
They look'd around, and lo! they became free!
Their many tyrants sitting desolately
In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain;
For wrath's red fire had wither'd in the eye,
Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain
Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI.

"Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasp'd them round,
Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt
In the white furnace; and a vision'd swound,
A pause of hope and awe the City bound,

Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
When in its awful shadow it has wound
The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leapt forth.

XII.

"Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky,
By winds from distant regions meeting there,
In the high name of truth and liberty,
Around the City millions gather'd were,
By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair;
Words, which the lore of truth in hues of grace
Array'd, thine own wild songs which in the air
Like homeless odours floated, and the name
Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipp'd in flame.

XIII.

"The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
And whatsoe'er, when force is impotent,
To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
To curse the rebels.—To their God did they*
For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

XIV.

"And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell
From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
How glorious Athens in her splendour fell,

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* To their gods, &c.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Because her sons were free,—and that among
Mankind, the many to the few belong,
By God, and Nature, and Necessity.*
They said, that age was truth, and that the young,
Marr'd with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
With which old times and men had quell'd the vain and free.

XV.

"And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips
They breathed on the enduring memory
Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse;
†There was one teacher, and must ever be,
They said, even God, who, the necessity
Of rule and wrong had arm'd against mankind,
His slave and his avenger there to be;
That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
And that the will of one was peace, and we
Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery.

XVI.

"'For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter.'
So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied;
Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter
Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide;
And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,
And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue and wide,
Said, that the rule of men was over now,
And hence, the subject world to woman's will must bow.

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* By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.—*Revolt of Islam*

† There was one teacher, who necessity
Had arm'd with strength and wrong against mankind,
His slave and his avenger aye to be.—*Ibid.*

XVII.

" And gold was scatter'd thro' the streets, and wine
Flow'd at a hundred feasts within the wall.
In vain! the steady towers in Heaven did shine
As they were wont, nor at the priestly call,
Left Plague her banquet in the Æthiop's hall,
Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,
Where at her ease she ever preys on all
Who throng to kneel for food: nor fear nor shame,
Nor faith, nor discord, dimm'd hope's newly kindled flame.

XVIII.

" For gold was as a God whose faith began
To fade, so that its worshippers were few,
And Hell and Awe, which in the heart of man*
Is God itself; the Priests its downfall knew,
As day by day their altars lonelier grew,
Till they were left alone within the fane;
The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
And the cold sneers of calumny were vain,
The union of the free with discord's brand to stain.

XIX.

" The rest thou knowest—Lo! we two are here—
We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve or fear,
Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
I smile, tho' human love should make me weep.

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* And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew
Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
Till the Priests stood alone within the fane—*Revolt of Islam.*

We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-
morrow.

XX.

"We know not what will come—yet Laon, dearest,
Cythna shall be the prophetess of love,
Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove
Within the homeless future's wintry grove;
For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem
Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
And violence and wrong are as a dream
Which rolls from stedfast truth an unreturning stream.

XXI.

"The blasts of autumn drive the winged seeds
Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain,
And frosts, and storms, which dreary winter leads
Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train;
Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again,
Shedding soft dews from her æthereal wings;
Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain,
And music on the waves and woods she flings,
And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII.

"O Spring, of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness,
Wind-winged emblem! brightest, best and fairest!
Whence comest thou, when, with dark winter's sadness
The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest;
Sister of joy, thou art the child who wearest
Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet;

Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet,
Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII.

"Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,
Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves.
Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves?
Lo, Winter comes!—the grief of many graves,
The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
Stagnate like ice at Faith, the enchanter's word,
And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorr'd.

XXIV.

"The seeds are sleeping in the soil: meanwhile
The tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey,
Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
Because they cannot speak: and, day by day,
The moon of wasting Science wanes away
Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
And grey Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

XXV.

"This is the winter of the world;—and here
We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
Behold! Spring comes, tho' we must pass, who made
The promise of its birth,—even as the shade
Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings
The future, a broad sunrise; thus array'd
As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
From its dark gulf of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI.

"O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold
Before this morn may on the world arise;
Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?
Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
On thine own heart—it is a paradise
Which everlasting spring has made its own,
And while drear Winter fills the naked skies,
Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh blown,
Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII.

"In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
Which made them great, the good will ever find;
And tho' some envious shade may interlope
Between the effect and it, one comes behind,
Who aye the future to the past will bind—
Necessity, whose sightless strength forever
Evil with evil, good with good must wind
In bands of union, which no power may sever:
They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

XXVIII.

"The good and mighty of departed ages
Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
Who leave the vesture of their majesty
To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we
Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive
To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

XXIX.

"So be the turf heap'd over our remains
Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought
Pass from our being, or be number'd not
Among the things that are; let those who come
Behind, for whom our stedfast will has bought
A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

XXX.

"Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love,
Our happiness, and all that we have been,
Immortally must live, and burn and move,
When we shall be no more;—the world has seen
A type of peace; and as some most serene
And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye,
After long years, some sweet and moving scene
Of youthful hope returning suddenly,
Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee

XXXI.

"And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
As worms devour the dead, and near the throne
And at the altar, most accepted thus
Shall sneers and curses be;—what we have done
None shall dare vouch, tho' it be truly known;
That record shall remain, when they must pass
Who built their pride on its oblivion;
And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
Survive the perish'd scrolls of unenduring brass.

XXXII.

"The while we two, beloved, must depart.
And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair

Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart
That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair:
These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
To fade in hideous ruin; no calm sleep
Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep
In joy;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep!

XXXIII.

"These are blind fancies—reason cannot know
What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive;
There is delusion in the world—and woe,
And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live,
Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
Or even these thoughts:—Come near me! I do weave
A chain I cannot break—I am possest
With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast.

XXXIV.

Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm
O! willingly beloved, would these eyes,
Might they no more drink being from thy form,
Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
Close their faint orbs in death: I fear nor prize
Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
Yes, Love when wisdom fails make Cythna wise:
Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoy'd with thee.

XXXV.

"Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters
Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven,
The Ocean and the Sun, the clouds their daughters,
Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even.

All that we are or know, is darkly driven
Towards one gulf—Lo! what a change is come
Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
Tho' it change all but thee!"—She ceased, night's gloom
Meanwhile had fall'n on earth from the sky's sunless dome.

XXXVI.

Tho' she had ceased, her countenance uplifted
To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright;
Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
The air they breathed with love, her locks undight;
"Fair star of life and love," I cried, "my soul's delight,
Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies?
O, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night,
Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes!"
She turn'd to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise!

CANTO TENTH.

I.

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
He broke our linked rest? or do indeed
All living things a common nature own,
And thought erect an universal throne,
Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
To see her sons contend? and makes she bare
Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II.

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue,
Which was not human—the lone Nightingale
Has answer'd me with her most soothing song,
Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale
With grief, and sigh'd beneath ; from many a dale
The Antelopes who flock'd for food have spoken
With happy sounds, and motions, that avail
Like man's own speech ; and such was now the token
Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

III.

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
And I return'd with food to our retreat,
And dark intelligence ; the blood which flow'd
Over the fields, had stain'd the courser's feet ;—
Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew,—then meet
The vulture, and the wild-dog, and the snake,
The wolf, and the hyæna grey, and eat
The dead in horrid truce : their throngs did make
Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV.

For, from the utmost realms of earth, came pouring
The banded slaves whom every despot sent
At that throned traitor's summons ; like the roaring
Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
In the scorch'd pastures of the South ; so bent
The armies of the leagued kings around
The files of steel and flame ;—the continent
Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their Navies' sound

V.

From every nation of the earth they came,
The multitude of moving heartless things,
Whom slaves call men : obediently they came,
Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
To the stall, red with blood ; their many kings
Led them, thus erring, from their native home ;
Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings
Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI.

Fertile in prodigies and lies ;—so there
Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear
His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will
Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure ;
But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
And savage sympathy : those slaves impure,
Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII.

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
His countenance in lies,—even at the hour
When he was snatch'd from death, then o'er the globe.
With secret signs from many a mountain tower,
With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
Of kings and priests, those dark conspirators
He call'd :—they knew his cause their own, and swore
Like wolves, and serpents to their mutual wars
Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven abhors.

VIII.

Myriads had come—millions were on their way;
The Tyrant past, surrounded by the steel
Of hired assassins, thro' the public way,
Choked with his country's dead: his footsteps reel
On the fresh blood—he smiles, "Ay, now I feel
I am a King in truth!" he said, and took
His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
And scorpions; that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX.

"But first, go slay the rebels—why return
The victor bands?" he said; "millions yet live,
Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
The scales of victory yet;—let none survive
But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
The expiation for his brethren here.—
Go forth, and waste and kill!"—"O king, forgive
My speech," a soldier answer'd—"but we fear
The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near;

X.

"For we were slaying still without remorse,
And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand
Defenceless lay, when, on a hell-black horse,
An Angel bright as day, waving a brand
Which flash'd among the stars, past."—"Dost thou stand
Parleying with me, thou wretch?" the king replied;
"Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band,
Whoso will drag that woman to his side
That scared him thus, may burn his dearest toe beside;

XI.

"And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth !"
They rush'd into the plain.—Loud was the roar
Of their career : the horsemen shook the earth ;
The wheel'd artillery's speed the pavement tore ;
The infantry, file after file did pour
Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
Among the wasted fields : the sixth saw gore
Stream thro' the city ; on the seventh the dew
Of slaughter became stiff ; and there was peace anew :

XII.

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead !
Peace in the silent streets ! save when the cries
Of victims to their fiery judgment led,
Made pale their voiceless lips who seem'd to dread
Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
Be faithless to the fear yet unbetray'd ;
Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng
Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song !

XIII.

Day after day the burning Sun roll'd on
Over the death-polluted land—it came
Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame
The few lone ears of corn :—the sky became
Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
Languish'd and died,—the thirsting air did claim
All moisture, and a rotting vapour past
From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV.

First Want, then Plague came on the beasts; their food
Fail'd, and they drew the breath of its decay.
Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
Had lured, or who, from regions far away,
Had track'd the hosts in festival array,
From their dark deserts; gaunt and wasting now,
Stalk'd like fell shades among their perish'd prey;
In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV.

The fish were poison'd in the streams; the birds
In the green woods perished; the insect race
Was wither'd up; the scatter'd flocks and herds
Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase,
Died moaning, each upon the other's face
In helpless agony gazing; round the City
All night, the lean hyænas their sad case
Like starving infants wail'd; a woeful ditty!
And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI.

Amid the aërial minarets on high,
The Æthiopian vultures fluttering fell
From their long line of brethren in the sky,
Startling the concourse of mankind.— Too well
These signs the coming mischief did foretell:—
Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread
Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread
With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

XVII.

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare;
So on those strange and congregated hosts
Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air
Groan'd with the burthen of a new despair;
Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
Feeds from her thousand breasts, tho' sleeping there
With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood; conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

XVIII.

There was no food, the corn was trampled down,
The flocks and herds had perish'd; on the shore
The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown;
The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
Creak'd with the weight of birds, but as before
Those winged things sprang forth, were void of shade;
The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store,
Were burn'd;—so that the meanest food was weigh'd
With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

XIX.

There was no corn—in the wide market-place
All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold;
They weigh'd it in small scales—and many a face
Was fix'd in eager horror then: his gold
The miser brought, the tender maid, grown bold
Thro' hunger, bared her scorned charms in vain;
The mother brought her eldest born, controll'd
By instinct blind as love, but turn'd again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX.

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
" O, for the sheathed steel, so late which gave

Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
With brothers' blood! O, that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave!"
Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture howl and rave,
Or sit, in frenzy's unimagined mood,
Upon fresh heaps of dead; a ghastly multitude.

XXI.

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
A cauldron of green mist made visible
At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
Seeking to quench the agony of the flame,
Which raged like poison thro' their bursting veins;
Naked they were from torture, without shame,
Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains,
Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains

XXII.

It was not thirst but madness! many saw
Their own lean image everywhere, it went
A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent
Those shrieking victims; some, ere life was spent,
Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
Contagion on the sound; and others rent
Their matted hair, and cried aloud, "We tread
On fire! Almighty God his hell on earth has spread!"*

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* The avenging Power his hell on earth has spread.
Revolt of Islam.

XXIII.

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid.
Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
For life, in the hot silence of the air;
And strange 'twas, amid that hideous heap to see
Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
As if not dead, but slumbering quietly
Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV.

Famine had spared the palace of the king:—
He rioted in festival the while,
He and his guards and priests ; but Plague did fling
One shadow upon all. Famine can smile
On him who brings it food and pass, with guile
Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier grey,
The house-dog of the throne; but many a mile
Comes Plague, a winged wolf, who loathes alway
The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV.

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
That linger'd on his lips, the warrior's might
Was loosen'd, and a new and ghastlier night
In dreams of frenzy lapp'd his eyes; he fell
Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright
Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
Strange truths; a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI.

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror;
That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind,
Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error,
On their own hearts: they sought and they could find
No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind!
So, thro' the desolate streets to the high fane,
Of their Almighty God, the armies wind*
In sad procession: each among the train
To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII.

"O God!" they cried, "we know our secret pride
Has scorn'd thee, and thy worship, and thy name;
Secure in human power we have defied
Thy fearful might; we bend in fear and shame
Before thy presence; with the dust we claim
Kindred; be merciful, O King of Heaven!
Most justly have we suffer'd for thy fame
Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

XXVIII.

"O God Almighty! thou alone hast power!†
Who can resist thy will? who can restrain
Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower
The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain?
Greatest and best, be merciful again!
Have we not stabb'd thine enemies, and made
The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
Where thou wert worshipp'd with their blood, and laid

* The many-tongued and endless armies wind—*Revolt of Islam.*
† O King of Glory! thou alone hast power!—*Ibid.*

Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have weigh'd ?

XXIX.

" Well didst thou loosen on this impious City
Thine angels of revenge : recall them now ;
Thy worshippers abased, here kneel for pity,
And bind their souls by an immortal vow :
We swear by thee ! and to our oath do thou
Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame,
That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
The last of those who mock'd thy holy name,
And scorn'd the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim."

XXX.

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
Worshipp'd their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse
The light of other minds ;—troubled they past
From the great Temple ;—fiercely still and fast
The arrow of the plague among them fell
And they on one another gazed aghast,
And thro' the hosts contention wild befell,
As each of his own God the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI.

And Oromaze, and Christ, and Mahomet,*
Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh ;
A tumult of strange names, which never met
Before, as watchwords of a single woe,
Arose ; each raging votary 'gan to throw
Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl

* And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet—*Revolt of Islam.*

"Our God alone is God!" and slaughter now
Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl
A voice came forth, which pierced like ice thro' every soul.

XXXII.

He was a Christian Priest* from whom it came,
A zealous man, who led the legion'd west
With words which faith and pride had steep'd in flame,
To quell the rebel Atheists ;† a dire guest
Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
Did hate and guile lie watchful, interwined,
Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest ;
He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
To wreak his fear of God‡ in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII.

But more he loathed and hated the clear light
Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
Even where his Idol stood ; for, far and near
Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
That faith and tyranny were trampled down ;
Many a pale victim, doom'd for truth to share
The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own

XXXIV.

He dared not kill the infidels with fire
Or steel, in Europe : the slow agonies
Of legal torture mock'd his keen desire :
So he made truce with those who did despise

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* 'Twas an Iberian Priest—*Revolt of Islam.*

† To quell the unbelievers—*Ibid.*

‡ his fear of Heaven—*Ibid.*

His cradled Idol, and the sacrifice
Of God to God's own wrath,—that Islam's creed*
Might crush for him those deadlier enemies ;
For fear of God did in his bosom breed
A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV.

" Peace ! Peace !" he cried, " when we are dead, the Day
Of Judgment comes, and all shall surely know
Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
The errors of his faith in endless woe !
But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
On earth, because an impious race had spurn'd
Him whom we all adore,—a subtile foe,
By whom for ye this dread reward was earn'd,
And thrones, which rest on faith in God, nigh overturn'd.†

XXXVI.

" Think ye, because ye weep, and kneel, and pray,
That God will lull the pestilence? it rose
Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day
His mercy soothed it to a dark repose :
It walks upon the earth to judge his foes,
And what art thou and I, that he should deign
To curb his ghastly minister, or close
The gates of death, ere they receive the twain
Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign ?

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* The expiation, and the sacrifice,
That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed—
Revolt of Islam

† And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturn'd.—
Ibid.

XXXVII.

"Ay, there is famine in the gulph of hell,
Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
Their lurid eyes are on us! those who fell
By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn,
Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn
Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
To make our souls their spoil. See! See! they fawn
Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

XXXVIII.

"Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep:—
Pile high the pyre of expiation now!
A forest's spoil of boughs, and on the heap
Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
When touch'd by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high
A net of iron, and spread forth below
A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny!

XXXIX.

"Let Laon and Laone on that pyre,
Link'd tight with burning brass, perish!—then pray
That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
Of God may be appeased."* He ceased, and they
A space stood silent, as far, far away
The echoes of his voice among them died;
And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

* Of Heaven may be appeased.—*Revolt of Islam.*

XL.

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
Of fabled hell ; and as he spake, each one
Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
And Heaven above seem'd cloven, where on a throne
With storms and shadows girt, sate God, alone,*
Their King and Judge—fear kill'd in every breast
All natural pity then, a fear unknown
Before, and with an inward fire possess'd,
They raged like homeless beasts whom burning wood
invest.

XLI.

'Twas morn—at noon the public crier went forth,
Proclaiming thro' the living and the dead,
"The Monarch saith, that his great Empire's worth
Is set on Laon and Laone's head :
He who but one yet living here can lead,
Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
Shall be the kingdom's heir, a glorious meed !
But he who both alive can hither bring,
The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King."

XLII.

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
Was spread above, the fearful couch below,
It overtopp'd the towers that did environ
That spacious square ; for Fear is never slow
To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe,
So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude
To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow,
Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
By gad-flies, they have piled the heath, and gums, a
wood.

* Girt round with storms and shadows sate alone

Revolt of Isla

XLIII.

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom.
Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation ;
And in the silence of that expectation,
Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
It was so deep, save when the devastation
Of the swift pest with fearful interval,
Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

XLIV.

Morn came,—among those sleepless multitudes,
Madness, and Fear and Plague, and Famine still
Heap'd corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
Earth's cold and sullen brooks ; in silence still,
The pale survivors stood ; ere noon, the fear
Of hell became a panic, which did kill
Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear
As "hush ! hark ! Come they yet? God, God, thine hour is near !"*

XLV.

And Priests rush'd thro' their ranks, some counterfeiting
The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed
With their own lies ; they said their God was waiting
To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
And that, till then, the snakes of hell had need
Of human souls :—three hundred furnaces
Soon blazed thro' the wide City, where, with speed,

* Just heaven ! thine hour is near.—*Revolt of Islam.*

Men brought their atheist kindred* to appease
God's wrath, and while they burn'd, knelt round on quivering knees.

XLVI.

The noontide sun was darken'd with that smoke,
The winds of eve dispersed those ashes grey,
The madness which these rites had lull'd, awoke
Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
In balance just the good and evil there?
He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where
Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

XLVII.

'Tis said, a mother dragg'd three children then,
To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
And laugh'd and died; and that unholy men,
Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead,
Look'd from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
The threshold of God's throne, and it was she!†
And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
Came to the fire, and said, "Stop, I am he!
Kill me!" they burn'd them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII.

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came,
Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame
Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,

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* Men brought their infidel kindred—*Revolt of Islam.*

† The visible floor of heaven, and it was she!—*Ibid.*

And sung a low sweet song, of which alone
One word was heard, and that was Liberty ;
And that some kiss'd their marble feet, with moan
Like love, and died, and then that they did die
With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO ELEVENTH.

I.

SHE saw me not—she heard me not—alone
Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood ;
She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown
Over her look, the shadow of a mood
Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
A thought of voiceless depth ;—she stood alone,
Above, the Heavens were spread ;—below, the flood
Was murmuring in its caves ;—the wind had blown
Her hair apart, thro' which her eyes and forehead shone.

II.

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains ;
Before its blue and moveless depth were flying
Grey mists pour'd forth from the unresting fountains
Of darkness in the North :—the day was dying :—
Sudden, the sun shone forth, its beams were lying
Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
And on the shatter'd vapours, which defying
The power of light in vain, toss'd restlessly
In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III.

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
On either side by the cloud's cleft was made;
And where its chasms that flood of glory drank,
Its waves gush'd forth like fire, and as if sway'd
By some mute tempest, roll'd on *her;* the shade
Of her bright image floated on the river
Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver;
Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV.

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
She look'd upon the sea, and skies, and earth;
Rapture, and love, and admiration wrought
A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth,
Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
From common joy; which, with the speechless feeling
That led her there united, and shot forth
From her far eyes, a light of deep revealing,
All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

V.

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
Was now heard there;—her dark and intricate eyes
Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
Absorb'd the glories of the burning skies,
Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies.
Burst from her looks and gestures;—and a light
Of liquid tenderness like love, did rise
From her whole frame, an atmosphere which quite
Array'd her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI.

She would have clasp'd me to her glowing frame;
Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
Which now the cold winds stole;—she would have laid
Upon my languid heart her dearest head;
I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet;
Her eyes mingling with mine, might soon have fed
My soul with their own joy. One moment yet
I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet!

VII.

Never but once to meet on Earth again!
She heard me as I fled—her eager tone
Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a chain
Around my will to link it with her own,
So that my stern resolve was almost gone.
"I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly?
"My steps are faint—Come back, thou dearest one—
"Return, ah me! return"—the wind past by
On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII.

Woe! woe! that moonless midnight—Want and Pest
Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest
Eminent among those victims—even the Fear
Of Hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere
Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
By his own rage upon his burning bier
Of circling coals of fire; but still there clung
One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:

IX.

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,

For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossess'd
All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep,
But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous surge.

X.

Each of that multitude alone, and lost
To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tost,
Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
Whilst now the ship is splitting thro' and thro';
Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard,
Started from sick despair, or if there flew
One murmur on the wind, or if some word
Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirr'd

XI.

Why became cheeks wan with the kiss of death,
Paler from hope? they had sustain'd despair.
Why watch'd those myriads with suspended breath
Sleepless a second night? they are not here
The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear,
Warm corpses fall upon the clay cold dead;
And even in death their lips are wreathed with fear.
The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
Silent Arcturus shines—ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII.

Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream,
Of triumph not to be contain'd? see! hark!
They come, they come, give way! alas, ye deem
Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark

Driven, like a troop of spectres, thro' the dark,
From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
A lurid earth-star, which dropp'd many a spark
From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung
To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII.

And many from the crowd collected there,
Join'd that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
There was the silence of a long despair,
When the last echo of those terrible cries
Came from a distant street, like agonies
Stifled afar. Before the Tyrant's throne
All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
In stony expectation fix'd; when one
Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV.

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest
Conceal'd his face; but when he spake, his tone,
Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,
Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
Void of all hate or terror, made them start;
For as with gentle accents he address'd
His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

XV.

"Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
Amid the ruin which yourselves have made,
Yes, desolation heard your trumpet's blast,
And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror has obey'd
Your bidding—O, that I whom ye have made
Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free

From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade,
Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

XVI.

"Ye turn to God for aid* in your distress;
Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies
Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
To blind your slaves:—consider your own thought,
An empty and a cruel sacrifice
Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brough

XVII.

"Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day!
Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold,
Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
Severe task mistress! ye your hearts have sold.
Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
No evil dreams: all mortal things are cold
And senseless then; if aught survive, I deem
It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII.

"Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
O, could I win your ears to dare be now
Glorious, and great, and calm! that ye would cast
Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
Purple, and gold, and steel! that ye would go

* Ye turn to Heaven for aid—*Revolt of Islam*.

Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow;
And that mankind is free, and that the shame
Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame!

XIX.

"If thus, 'tis well—if not, I come to say
That Laon"—while the Stranger spoke, among
The council, sudden tumult and affray
Arose, for many of those warriors young,
Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
Like bees on mountain flowers; they knew the truth,
And from their thrones in vindication sprung;
The men of faith and law then without ruth
Drew forth their secret steel, and stabb'd each ardent youth.

XX.

They stabb'd them in the back and sneer'd—a slave
Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave;
And one more daring raised his steel anew
To pierce the Stranger: "What hast thou to do
With me, poor wretch?"—Calm, solemn, and severe,
That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear,
Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

XXI.

"It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
Ye cannot change, since ye are old and grey,
And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
A book of blood, whence in a milder day
Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapt in clay.
Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon's friend,

And him to your revenge will I betray,
So ye concede one easy boon. Attend!
For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII.

"There is a People mighty in its youth,
A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
Where, tho' with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
Are worshipp'd; from a glorious Mother's breast,
Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
By inbred monsters outraged and oppress'd,
Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom's fullest flow.

XXIII.

"That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapt in gloom;
An epitaph of glory for the tomb
Of murder'd Europe may thy fame be made,
Great People: as the sands shalt thou become;
Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade;
The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade

XXIV.

"Yes, in the desert then is built a home
For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear
The monuments of man beneath the dome
Of a new Heaven; myriads assemble there,
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,
Drive from their wasted homes: the boon I prav
Is this,—that Cythna shall be convey'd there—
Nay, start not at the name—America!
And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

XXV.

With me do what ye will. I am your foe!"
The light of such a joy as makes the stare
Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,
Shone in a hundred human eyes—"Where, where
Is Laon?—haste! fly! drag him swiftly here!
We grant thy boon."—"I put no trust in ye,
Swear by your dreadful God."*—"We swear, we swear!"
The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
And smiled in gentle pride, and said, "Lo! I am he!"

CANTO TWELFTH.

I.

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness
Spread thro' the multitudinous streets, fast flying
Upon the wings of fear; from his dull madness
The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope
Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
And fill'd the startled Earth with echoes: morn did ope

II.

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
Of guards in golden arms, and priests beside,
Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray

* Swear by the Power ye dread.—*Revolt of Islam.*

The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
A Shape of light is sitting by his side,
A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
Laon, exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III.

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
Their scoffs on him, tho' myriads throng around;
There are no sneers upon his lips which speak
That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek
Resolve has not turn'd pale,—his eyes are mild
And calm, and like the morn about to break,
Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled
To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV.

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw
Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide
Into their brain, and became calm with awe.—
See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
A thousand torches in the spacious square,
Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
Await the signal round: the morning fair
Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

V.

And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
Upon a platform level with the pile,
The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile

In expectation, but one child: the while
I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
Of fire, and look around; each distant isle
Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near,
Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI.

There was such silence through the host, as when
An earthquake trampling on some populous town,
Has crush'd ten thousand with one tread, and men
Expect the second; all were mute but one,
That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
Stood up before the King, without avail,
Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
Was heard—she trembled like one aspen pale
Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII.

What were his thoughts link'd in the morning sun,
Among those reptiles, stingless with delay,
Even like a tyrant's wrath?—the signal gun
Roar'd—hark, again! in that dread pause he lay
As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey—
A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last
Bursts on that awful silence; far away
Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII.

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear
The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
Bursts thro' their ranks: a woman sits thereon,

Fairer it seems than aught that earth can breed,
Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn,
A spirit from the caves of day-light wandering gone.

IX.

All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep
The lingering guilty to their fiery grave;
The Tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,—
Her innocence his child from fear did save;
Scared by the faith they feign'd, each priestly slave
Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood,
And, like the refluence of a mighty wave
Suck'd into the loud sea, the multitude
With crushing panic, fled in terror's alter'd mood.

X.

They pause, they blush, they gaze,—a gathering shout
Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams
Of a tempestuous sea:—that sudden rout
One check'd, who never in his mildest dreams
Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams
Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed
Had sear'd with blistering ice—but he misdeems
That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed
Inly for self, thus thought that Christian Priest indeed,*

XI.

And others too, thought he was wise to see,
In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine
In love and beauty—no divinity.—
Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine

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* thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed—*Revolt of Islam.*

Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne,
He said, and the persuasion of that sneer
Rallied his trembling comrades—"Is it mine
To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear
A woman? God has sent his other victim here."*

XII.

"Were it not impious," said the King, "to break
Our holy oath?"—"Impious to keep it, say!"
Shriek'd the exulting Priest—"Slaves, to the stake
Bind her, and on my head the burthen lay
Of her just torments:—at the Judgment Day
Will I stand up before God's golden throne
And cry, O Lord, to thee did I betray
An Atheist;† but for me she would have known
Another moment's joy! the glory be thine own."

XIII.

They trembled, but replied not, nor obey'd,
Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung
From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade
Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among
Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung
Upon his neck, and kiss'd his mooned brow.
A piteous sight, that one so fair and young,
The clasp of such a fearful death should woo
With smiles of tender joy as beam'd from Cythna now.

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* Heaven has sent its other victim here.—*Revolt of Islam.*

† Will I stand up before the golden throne
Of Heaven, and cry, to thee did I betray
An Infidel; &c.—*Ibid.*

XIV.

The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear,
From many a tremulous eye, but like soft dews
Which feed spring's earliest buds, hung gather'd there,
Frozen by doubt,—alas, they could not choose
But weep; for when her faint limbs did refuse
To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled;
And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues
Of her quick lips, even as a weary child
Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

XV.

She won them, tho' unwilling, her to bind
Near me, among the snakes. When then had fled
One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind,
She smiled on me, and nothing then we said,
But each upon the other's countenance fed
Looks of insatiate love; the mighty veil
Which doth divide the living and the dead
Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,—
All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.

XVI.

Yet,—yet—one brief relapse, like the last beam
Of dying flames, the stainless air around
Hung silent and serene—a blood-red gleam
Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground
The globed smoke,—I heard the mighty sound
Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean;
And, thro' its chasms I saw, as in a swound,
The tyrant's child fall without life or motion
Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.

XVII.

And is this death? the pyre has disappear'd,
The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng;
The flames grow silent—slowly there is heard
The music of a breath-suspending song,
Which like the kiss of love when life is young,
Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep;
With ever-changing notes it floats along,
Till on my passive soul there seem'd to creep
A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

XVIII.

The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand
Waken'd me then; lo, Cythna sate reclined
Beside me, on the waved and golden sand
Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined
With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind
Breathed divine odour; high above, was spread
The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

XIX.

And round about sloped many a lawny mountain
With incense-bearing forests, and vast caves
Of marble radiance to that mighty fountain;
And where the flood its own bright margin laves,
Their echoes talk with its eternal waves,
Which, from the depths whose jagged caverns breed
Their unreposing strife, it lifts and heaves,—
Till thro' a chasm of hills they roll, and feed
A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

XX.

As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,
A boat approach'd, borne by the musical air
Along the waves which sung and sparkled under
Its rapid keel—a winged shape sate there,
A child with silver-shining wings, so fair,
That as her bark did thro' the waters glide,
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear
Light, as from starry beams ; from side to side,
While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide

XXI.

The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl,
Almost translucent with the light divine
Of her within ; the prow and stern did curl
Horned on high, like the young moon supine,
When o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine,
It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams,
Whose golden waves in many a purple line
Fade fast, till borne on sunlight's ebbing streams,
Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

XXII.

Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet ;—
Then Cythna turn'd to me, and from her eyes
Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet
Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise,
Glanced as she spoke ; " Ay, this is Paradise
And not a dream, and we are all united !
Lo, that is mine own child, who in the guise
Of madness came, like day to one benighted
In lonesome woods : my heart is now too well requited !

XXIII.

And then she wept aloud, and in her arms
Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair
Than her own human hues and living charms;
Which, as she lean'd in passion's silence there,
Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air,
Which seem'd to blush and tremble with delight;
The glossy darkness of her streaming hair
Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapt from sight
The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

XXIV.

Then the bright child, the plumed Seraph came,
And fix'd its blue and beaming eyes on mine,
And said, "I was disturb'd by tremulous shame
When once we met, yet knew that I was thine
From the same hour in which thy lips divine
Kindled a clinging dream within my brain,
Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine
Thine image with *her* memory dear—again
We meet; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

XXV.

"When the consuming flames had wrapt me round,
The hope which I had cherish'd went away;
I fell in agony on the senseless ground,
And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray
My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day,
The Spectre of the Plague before me flew,
And breathed upon my lips, and seem'd to say,
'They wait for thee, beloved;'—then I knew
The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

XXVI.

" It was the calm of love—for I was dying.
I saw the black and half-extinguish'd pyre
In its own grey and shrunken ashes lying ;
The pitchy smoke of the departed fire
Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire
Above the towers like night ; beneath whose shade
Awed by the ending of their own desire
The armies stood ; a vacancy was made
In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismay'd.

XXVII.

" The frightful silence of that alter'd mood,
The tortures of the dying clove alone,
Till one uprose among the multitude,
And said—' The flood of time is rolling on,
We stand upon its brink, whilst *they* are gone
To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream.
Have ye done well ? they moulder flesh and bone,
Who might have made this life's envenom'd dream
A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

XXVIII.

" ' These perish as the good and great of yore
Have perish'd, and their murderers will repent,
Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before
Yon smoke has faded from the firmament
Even for this cause, that ye who must lament
The death of those that made this world so fair,
Cannot recall them now ; but then is lent
To man the wisdom of a high despair,
When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

XXIX.

"'Ay, ye may fear not now the Pestilence,
From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn,
All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence
In torment and in fire have Atheists gone ;*
And ye must sadly turn away, and moan
In secret, to his home each one returning,
And to long ages shall this hour be known ;
And slowly shall its memory, ever burning,
Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

XXX.

"'For me the world is grown too void and cold,
Since hope pursues immortal destiny
With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold
How Atheists and Republicans can die ;†
Tell to your children this !' then suddenly
He sheathed a dagger in his heart and fell ;
My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me
There came a murmur from the crowd, to tell
Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

XXXI.

"Then suddenly I stood a winged Thought
Before the immortal Senate, and the seat
Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought
The strength of its dominion, good and great,
The better Genius of this world's estate.
His realm around one mighty Fane is spread,
Elysian islands bright and fortunate,
Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead,
Where I am sent to lead !" these winged words she said,

---

* In pain and fire have unbelievers gone—*Revolt of Islam.*

† How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die—*Ibid.*

XXXII.

And with the silence of her eloquent smile,
Bade us embark in her divine canoe ;
Then at the helm we took our seat, the while
Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue
Into the winds' invisible stream she threw,
Sitting beside the prow : like gossamer,
On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew
O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair,
Whose shores receded fast, whilst we seem'd lingering there ;

XXXIII.

Till down that mighty stream dark, calm, and fleet,
Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven,
Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet
As swift as twinkling beams, had, under Heaven,
From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven,
The boat fled visibly—three nights and days,
Borne like a cloud thro' morn, and noon, and even,
We sail'd along the winding watery ways
Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

XXXIV.

A scene of joy and wonder to behold
That river's shapes and shadows changing ever,
Where the broad sunrise, fill'd with deepening gold,
Its whirlpools, where all hues did spread and quiver,
And where melodious falls did burst and shiver
Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray
Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river,
Or when the moonlight pour'd a holier day,
One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

XXXV.

Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran
The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud
Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man,
Which flieth forth and cannot make abode,
Sometimes thro' forests, deep like night, we glode,
Between the walls of mighty mountains crown'd
With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud,
The homes of the departed, dimly frown'd
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

XXXVI.

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows,
Mile after mile we sail'd, and 'twas delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass ; sometimes beneath the night
Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright
With starry gems, we fled, whilst from their deep
And dark-green chasms, shades beautiful and white,
Amid sweet sounds across our path would sweep,
Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

XXXVII.

And ever as we sail'd, our minds were full
Of love and wisdom, which would overflow
In converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful ;
And in quick smiles whose light would come and go,
Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow
Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress—
For a deep shade was cleft, and we did know,
That virtue, tho' obscured on Earth, not less
Survives all mortal change in lasting loveliness.

XXXVIII.

Three nights and days we sail'd, as thought and feeling
Number delightful hours—for thro' the sky
The sphered lamps of day and night, revealing
New changes and new glories, roll'd on high,
Sun, Moon, and moonlike lamps, the progeny
Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair :
On the fourth day, wild as a wind-wrought sea
The stream became, and fast and faster bare
The spirit-winged boat, steadily speeding there.

XXXIX.

Steady and swift, where the waves roll'd like mountains
Within the vast ravine, whose rifts did pour
Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains,
The thunder of whose earth-uplifting roar
Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore,
Calm as a shade, the boat of that fair child
Securely fled, that rapid stress before,
Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild,
Wreathed in the silver mist : in joy and pride we smiled.

XL.

The torrent of that wide and raging river
Is past, and our aërial speed suspended.
We look behind ; a golden mist did quiver
When its wild surges with the lake were blended :
Our bark hung there, as one line* suspended
Between two heavens, that windless waveless lake ;
Which four great cataracts from four vales, attended
By mists, aye feed ; from rocks and clouds they break,
And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

* Qy?—on a line.

XLI.

Motionless resting on the lake awhile,
I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear
Their peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle
And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere
Hung in one hollow sky, did there appear
The Temple of the Spirit ; on the sound
Which issued thence, drawn nearer and more near,
Like the swift moon this glorious earth around,
The charmed boat approach'd, and there its haven found.

NOTE

Mr. Swinburne, in his *Essays and Studies*, pp. 19
194, says : " Before passing from this poem ['The Revo
of Islam'], I have to express a hope that a final editio
of Shelley's works will some day, rather sooner tha
later, restore to it the proper title and the genuine tex
Every change made in it was forced upon the author l
pressure from without ; and every change is for tl
worse. Has no reader ever asked himself what can l
the meaning of the second title? What is the revo
of Islam? Islam is not put forward as the sole creed
the tyrants and slaves who play their parts here wi
such frank ferocity ; Persian and Indian, Christian a
Mahometan mythologies are massed together for attac
And certainly Islam is not, as the rules of langua
would imply, the creed of the insurgents. Could t
phrase 'revolt of the Christians' be taken to signify
revolt against the Christians? There is at least meani
in the first title--'Laon and Cythna, or the Revoluti
of the Golden City.' Readers may prefer a text whi
makes hero and heroine strangers in blood, but the f
remains that Shelley saw fit to make them brother a
sister, and to defend their union as essentially innoc
even if socially condemnable."

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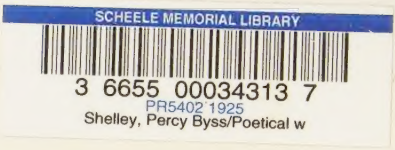
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